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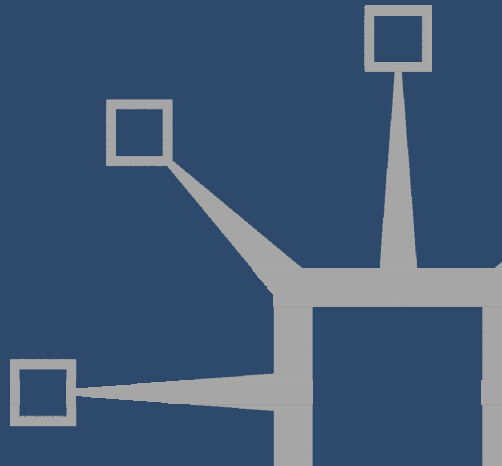
# On Hegel

The Sway of the Negative

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Karin de Boer

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# On Hegel

## The Sway of the Negative

Karin de Boer

*University of Groningen, The Netherlands*

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# Contents

<i>Series Editor's Preface</i>	viii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	x
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 Tragedy</b>	<b>10</b>
1 Introduction	10
2 <i>The Essay on Natural Law</i>	11
3 <i>The Oresteia</i>	14
4 Tragic Entanglements	15
5 <i>The Antigone</i>	17
6 The Logic of Entanglement	25
<b>2 Logic</b>	<b>30</b>
1 Introduction	30
2 Reason and the Understanding	31
3 Transcendental Synthesis	34
4 Hegel, Kant, and General Metaphysics	36
5 Hegel, Kant, and Special Metaphysics	37
6 The Content of the <i>Logic</i>	39
7 From the Ego to the Concept	42
8 Synthetic Concepts as Definitions of the Absolute	44
9 The Role of Synthetic Concepts in Finite Knowledge	47
10 The Principle of Speculative Science	50
<b>3 Negativity</b>	<b>54</b>
1 Introduction	54
2 The History of Pure Thought	55
3 <i>The Doctrine of Being</i>	59
4 <i>The Doctrine of Essence</i>	63
5 <i>The Doctrine of the Concept</i>	66
6 The Concept of Something	68
7 The Guises of Absolute Negativity	71
8 The Cunning of the Concept	76
9 The Method of Speculative Science	80

<b>4</b>	<b>Tragedy and Logic</b>	<b>84</b>
1	Introduction	84
2	The Tragic Strand of Kant's Doctrine of the Antinomies	85
3	The Concept of Infinity	88
4	The Concept of Being-for-Itself	92
5	The Concept of Contradiction	95
6	Recognition	97
7	Tragedy and Modernity	100
<b>5</b>	<b>Time and Circularity</b>	<b>103</b>
1	Introduction	103
2	Hegel and Schelling	105
3	A Circle of Circles: The Construction of the System	109
4	The Logical Beginning of the World	118
5	Hegel's Metaphysics of Time	121
6	The Initial Entanglement of Concept and Time	126
<b>6</b>	<b>Nature</b>	<b>128</b>
1	Introduction	128
2	The Middle Term between Nature and Consciousness	129
3	Aether	132
4	Space and Time	133
5	Inorganic and Organic Nature	137
6	The Animal	138
7	Human Consciousness	142
8	Conclusion	145
<b>7</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>147</b>
1	Introduction	147
2	The Immemorial Advent of Language	149
3	The Original Word	152
4	The Interpenetration of Language and Thought	154
<b>8</b>	<b>Teleology</b>	<b>158</b>
1	Introduction	158
2	The End-Relation	160
3	External Purposiveness	161
4	The Means	162
5	Internal Purposiveness	164
6	The Ultimate End of the World	166
7	The Entanglement of the End and its Inner Externality	171

8	Finite Spirit	175
9	Tragic Negativity	177
<b>9</b>	<b>History</b>	<b>180</b>
1	Introduction	180
2	Hegel's Conception of World History	181
3	Economy	185
4	Politics	189
5	Intercultural Conflicts	195
6	The Goal of World History	202
	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>205</b>
	<i>Notes</i>	208
	<i>Bibliography</i>	251
	<i>Index</i>	260



# Series Editor's Preface

The first question that is likely to engage readers of a work published in the series *Renewing Philosophy* is in what sense a reading of Hegel could contribute to such renewal. After all, the reading of Hegel seems to have been determinative for French philosophy in the twentieth century. The French reception of Hegel, however, tended to focus predominantly on the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, leaving the reading of the *Science of Logic* either deferred or presented in the shadow of the earlier *Phenomenology*.<sup>1</sup> This indicates one task for a new reading of Hegel; that it should respond more systematically to the general outline of his immense *oeuvre* and focus in particular much more extensively on the *Science of Logic*.

Karin de Boer takes such a path in this book, not least in presenting the reading of the *Science of Logic* as decisive for viewing central elements of Hegel's philosophy, some of which are demarcated in their own terms in other works. De Boer presents a logic that is taken from Hegel's thought and yet which Hegel himself does not mark as its decisive moment. This is the logic of *entanglement* and this book is informed by a continuous engagement with it. In so engaging, De Boer's work marks a new stage of response to Hegel. The first stage, defined most decisively by Marx and the formation of 'Marxism' as a set of doctrinal positions, focused overwhelmingly on Hegel's dialectics. The works of Kojève and Hyppolite both respond to this reading and radicalize it. In the light of the deformations of 'Marxism' they attempted to recover a reading of Hegel through the prism of history, a reading that, in its turn, was the background for much of the later resistance both to Hegel and to Marxism.

The second stage of response to Hegel, by contrast, was guided by a concern with probing the difficulty of Hegel's 'resolutions' of contradictions. Marked by philosophers such as Adorno, Heidegger, and Derrida, this second stage produced readings of Hegel rather than renditions of more or less plausible slogans, but still tended to view Hegel in a way that was itself often structurally negative.<sup>2</sup> Nowhere is the negativity of this second stage more evident than in the Frankfurt School readings of Hegel, which made a virtue of such negative construal.<sup>3</sup>

The third stage that is emerging now, by contrast, requires not only a close reading of Hegel but also a recovery of his systematic intent. It is

here that De Boer's reading is central. Focusing on the *Science of Logic* she invites us to see this work as having a sense that emerges, in a way, behind Hegel's own back. The sense that comes out is one in which the *entangled* connections between contrary determinations return to haunt Hegel's predominant optimism. This entanglement requires a revisiting of the central elements of Hegel's work, which are here presented in learned and engaged readings. From them we learn surprising lessons on topics that previously appeared to have been exhausted. Who would have expected that the account of teleology in Hegel could be related so clearly to his view of language or that the conception of history itself could be so patiently connected to his logic? By following a logic that Hegel enacts more than he describes, De Boer teaches us anew here. In opening the reading of Hegel to such entanglement it may even be that she is preparing us yet for a *future* of Hegel, a future that would enable readers of him to take new paths out of his writing and to overcome the sense of exhaustion with which contemporary philosophy is too often afflicted.<sup>4</sup> In *On Hegel: The Sway of the Negative* De Boer reminds us how to philosophize and she does so in a way that may yet enable us to think differently about the nature of our own modernity.

GARY BANHAM  
Series Editor  
*Renewing Philosophy*

# Acknowledgments

The work of the negative, I have learned from experience, takes a long time. But now that the work is done I am reminded of a mole that is about to leave its tunnels and break through the surface, an image Hegel uses at the very end of his lectures on the history of philosophy. The route taken has not been straightforward, yet every part of it has enriched my understanding of Hegel and his legacy to contemporary philosophy. Its various stretches are marked by encounters that are precious to me. Of those who inspired and challenged me I would like to thank in particular Adriaan Peperzak, who introduced me to Hegel when I was an undergraduate student, Samuel IJsseling, Ludwig Heyde, Françoise Dastur, and Hent de Vries.

Over the years my work on Hegel has greatly benefited from stimulating discussions with friends, colleagues, students, and audiences. While I would like to thank each of them, I am particularly grateful to those who invited me to present papers related to this book: Céline Surprenant (Sussex), Andrea Kern and Christoph Menke (Potsdam), Michael Naas (DePaul University), David Levin (Northwestern University of Chicago), Rodolphe Gasché (Buffalo), Thomas Schwarz Wentzer (Aarhus), Julia Peters and David Schweikard (Cologne), Walter Jaeschke (Bochum), Stephen Houlgate (Warwick), Ernst-Otto Onnasch (VU Amsterdam), Simon Critchley (New School for Social Research), Allegra de Laurentiis (SUNY at Stony Brook), Gertrudis VandeVijver (Ghent), and Beth Lord (Dundee). Thanks are also due to the Hegel Society of Great Britain, the Hegel Society of America, the Hegel-Gesellschaft, and the organizers of the International Graduate Conference in Philosophy (Essex) for providing me with the opportunity to present my work.

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I write this book, and to Steven Gormley for his meticulous correction of the manuscript.

Earlier versions of three chapters have been published in Dutch and German (Chapter 5: 'Begriff und Zeit. Die Selbstentäußerung des Begriffs und ihre Wiederholung in Hegels Spekulativem System', in: *Hegel-Studien*, Bd. 35, 2000, 11–49; Chapter 6: 'De tijd, het dier en het ontstaan van innerlijkheid: over Hegels vroege natuurfilosofie', in: *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 63/2, 2001, 283–318; Chapter 8: 'Zur Dekonstruktion des Hegelschen Zweckbegriffs', in: C. Menke and A. Kern (eds), *Dekonstruktion als Philosophie*, Suhrkamp, 2002, 80–102). I am grateful to Humanity Books and Taylor and Francis Books UK for permission to reprint material from *Hegel's Science of Logic*, edited by H.D. Lewis and translated by A.V. Miller (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books 1998). I am grateful as well for permission to reprint material from the following publications:

- Chapter 1: 'Tragic Entanglements: Between Hegel and Derrida', *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 45, 2003, 34–49, and 'Hegel's *Antigone* and the Tragedy of Cultural Difference', *Mosaic* 41/3, 2008, 31–45.
- Chapter 2: 'The Dissolving Force of the Concept: Hegel's Ontological Logic', *Review of Metaphysics* 57/4, 2004, 787–822.
- Chapter 6: 'The Emergence of Ideality: Hegel's Conception of the Animal in the Jena Philosophy of Nature' in: E.-O. Onnasch (ed.), *Kants Metaphysik der Natur. Ihre Entwicklung bis zum Opus postumum und Nachwirkung* (Berlin: De Gruyter 2009), 435–56.
- Chapter 7: 'The Infinite Movement of Self-Conception and its Inconceivable Finitude: Hegel on Logos and Language', *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review* XL/1, 2001, 75–97.
- Chapter 9: 'Hegel's Account of the Present: An Open-Ended History', in: W. Dudley (ed.), *Hegel and History* (Albany: SUNY Press 2009), and 'Hegel Today: Towards a Tragic Conception of Intercultural Conflicts', in: *Cosmos and History* 3/2–3, 2007, 19–33.

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# Introduction

Our world is a world of clashing perspectives, values, and principles. These clashes remind us ever more acutely that the prevailing self-understanding of modernity has lost much of its pertinence. This self-understanding largely relies, in my view, on clear-cut oppositions such as progress and tradition, reason and faith, the public and the private, freedom and terror, justice and power, nation and tribe. Whereas modernity has often acknowledged the potential conflicts between such contrary moments, it has equally often asserted its capacity to control, if not to resolve, these conflicts. There is no doubt that the history of the twentieth century calls into question this innate optimism of modern thought. The violations of human dignity performed in our midst can no longer be cancelled out, in the eyes of many, by the purported increase of freedom, wealth, or stability. The globalization of economic, technological, and media power entails that socio-political conflicts are less and less controlled by geopolitical borders. Although these developments do not warrant a pessimism that is but the reverse of the prevailing faith in progress, they do warrant doubt as to the capacity of modernity to account for the utter precariousness of the human condition. More than ever, it seems to me, philosophy faces the task of challenging the prevailing paradigm of modernity.<sup>1</sup>

I consider Hegel's philosophy to be pivotal to modernity's self-criticism for two reasons. The first reason concerns Hegel's own critique of modernity. According to the *Philosophy of Right*, philosophy must grasp its own time in thought (PR 26/21). Hegel achieved this task primarily by denouncing the tendency of modernity to treat contrary determinations as clear-cut oppositions. Whereas modern thought, in his view, unduly assumed the relative independence of contraries such as necessity and freedom, the inner and the outer, essence and

appearance, he believed that ‘the sole interest of philosophy consists in resolving such rigidified oppositions’.<sup>2</sup> Only thus might it achieve insight into the dynamic unity constitutive of thought, nature, and history.

The second reason to regard Hegel’s philosophy as pivotal to modernity’s self-criticism is its impact on the philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Since Hegel’s death in 1831, philosophy has been largely motivated by attempts to overcome a Hegelianism deemed excessively optimistic. As we will see, however, it is precisely because Hegel incorporated modernity’s optimism into his philosophical method that he could criticize the reliance of modern thought on rigid oppositions. Since Hegel’s own criticism of modern thought depends on the often contested idea of necessary progress, it would seem that his philosophy cannot possibly be used for a contemporary criticism of modernity’s prevailing paradigm.

I will contend, by contrast, that Hegel’s philosophy does offer valuable resources for such a criticism. In my view, these resources reside not so much in the contents generated by speculative science as in its very principle. In order to set free the critical force of Hegel’s method, I will argue that Hegel’s speculative science as a whole testifies to a deep tension between two different strands, namely, a tragic and a dialectical strand.<sup>3</sup> Whereas, as I hope to show, the dialectical strand allowed Hegel to develop a comprehensive philosophical system, this book deploys its tragic strand to develop a contemporary criticism of Hegel’s philosophy and modernity alike. It is for this reason that the following pages are devoted to Hegel.

The *Phenomenology of Spirit*, published in 1807, urges philosophy to respond to its own time by facing the ‘tremendous sway of the negative’ (Phen 26/19). Modern culture will not overcome the divide by which it is torn apart, in Hegel’s view, unless it assumes negativity as its proper principle, that is, as the very ‘energy of thought’.<sup>4</sup> As will be argued in the first chapter, Hegel developed his conception of absolute negativity primarily by reflecting on the essence of tragic conflicts.<sup>5</sup> Drawing on tragedies such as *The Eumenides* and the *Antigone*, he considered Greek tragedy to exhibit, first, that complementary determinations of a particular principle necessarily become opposed to one another and, second, that their ensuing conflict can only be resolved when each of these moments recognizes its own one-sidedness. As I see it, Hegel transformed this dynamic into the very principle of his philosophical method.

Abstracting from the fate of tragic heroes, Hegel’s readings of tragedy highlight the conflict he considered to define Greek culture as such. This

first abstraction subsequently allowed him to consider not just human culture, but *any* mode of thought in light of the negativity at work in tragic conflicts. Even the rigid oppositions of modern philosophy could thus emerge as momentary results of the absolute negativity that establishes and resolves any such oppositions. Hegel took these decisive steps during his stay in Jena between 1801 and 1807. Only the last step truly set free, in my view, the tremendous energy that allowed him to mount, on the one hand, a profound critique of modern thought and, on the other, a philosophical system the depth and richness of which have never been surpassed.

However, this does not yet explain how the resources of speculative science might be employed for a contemporary self-criticism of modernity. This can be done, I hold, by assuming, first, that something got lost when Hegel converted his conception of tragic conflicts into the principle of speculative science and, second, by converting this lost element into a philosophical principle of its own. In order to achieve this aim, this book begins by examining Hegel's earliest account of tragedy in *The Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law* (1802/03), to which I will refer as the *Essay on Natural Law*. Hegel here suggests that the contrary determinations of justice inherent in Greek culture were initially entangled to such an extent that the subsequent unfolding of their conflict threatened to result in their mutual destruction. I will call this the tragic strand of Hegel's conception of tragic conflicts. On the other hand, the *Essay on Natural Law* already considers tragic conflicts in light of the absolute negativity that was to become the principle of Hegel's dialectical method. I will call this the dialectical strand of Hegel's conception of tragic conflicts.

After 1802/03 Hegel almost completely abandoned the notion of entanglement (*Verwicklung*). Yet in what follows I hope to deploy the implications of this notion against the prevailing tendency of Hegel's mature philosophy. I will do this by arguing that the contrary determinations of any particular principle – that is, not just of ethical life – are initially entangled *in such a way* that their attempt at annulling their mutual dependence necessarily yields their conflict, but not necessarily its resolution. Thus repeating Hegel's own gesture, I hope to retrieve the tragic strand of Hegel's conception of tragic conflicts so as to raise it, in its turn, into a basic philosophical principle.

According to the logic that relies on this principle – the logic of entanglement – the negativity that inhabits the collision between contrary determinations is tragic rather than absolute. This tragic negativity, as I propose to call it, eludes Hegel's distinction between abstract and absolute negativity. In my view, Hegel established this distinction



precisely in order to efface the self-undermining at work in conflicts between contrary determinations. Thus, whereas the concept of entanglement pertains to the *relation* between contrary moments, the concept of tragic negativity pertains to the self-undermining *dynamic* that haunts their efforts at self-actualization.

The term 'tragic' is usually taken to refer to the fatal events represented in tragedies and, more broadly, to conflicts and losses considered beyond human control. I follow Hegel's abstraction from these current meanings in order to develop a perspective on tragic conflicts that is concerned with their very structure rather than with their outcome. Whereas this perspective affirms the precariousness of whatever we venture to undertake, it steers clear of the pessimism and fatalism often associated with tragedy. It is formal enough, moreover, to permit a comprehension of the conflicts at stake in purely conceptual oppositions as well. Since such oppositions tend to penetrate into everything we think, philosophy, I hold, cannot forgo reflection on the structure of these oppositions themselves.

The principle of tragic negativity thus brought into play obviously cannot supply the kind of energy required to develop an encompassing philosophical system – provided our age would still be interested in such a thing. What might be gained from it, however, is a systematic way of exposing the inadequacy of, first, the dichotomies on which modernity relies and, second, the optimism inherent in modernity and Hegel's philosophy alike. Although Hegel, in my view, could not but efface the sway of tragic negativity, I do not wish to criticize his philosophy as such. I will rather maintain that Hegel did not sufficiently distinguish between the infinite plasticity of his system and the realm of human culture it was meant to comprehend.<sup>6</sup> Hegel could not have developed his system without assuming that conflicts between contrary determinations are necessarily resolved, that is, without adopting absolute negativity as the very principle of this system. Yet human culture also testifies to oppositions and conflicts that tend to resist their dialectical resolution. Hegel certainly acknowledged this resistance. Yet he could only do so, I will argue, by defining this resistance as a subordinate moment of absolute negativity itself. It is at this point that my conception of tragic conflicts turns against the predominant strand of Hegel's philosophy. By considering such conflicts from the perspective of tragic negativity, as I propose to do, the sway of absolute negativity turns out to be limited by a force it can neither incorporate nor exclude from itself.

My critical reading of Hegel draws on his own conception of philosophical critique.<sup>7</sup> The nature of this critique emerges very clearly from

a remark in the *Science of Logic*. According to Hegel, Spinoza's system, while being true, essential, and necessary, unduly regarded itself as the highest possible position (L II, 249/580). The *Logic* only has to refute this latter claim. Such a refutation, Hegel notes,

must not proceed from assumptions which lie outside the system in question and do not accord with it. The system itself, however, need not recognize these assumptions....The genuine refutation must penetrate the power of its opponent [*in die Kraft des Gegners eingehen*] and adopt a position within reach of its strength [*sich in den Umkreis seiner Stärke stellen*]; the matter at hand is not served by attacking him from without and by being proved right where he is not.<sup>8</sup>

What I endorse above all is Hegel's view that a philosophical system 'contains' assumptions it cannot completely incorporate (250/581). For were a system to do so, it would deprive itself of the strength it derived from its former principle and, hence, turn into a different system altogether. Since the system at hand implicitly relies on certain assumptions, the latter are not completely external to the system. Yet since they cannot actually be retrieved by this system, they are neither completely internal to it. The *Science of Logic*, I will argue, makes explicit the quasi-internal assumptions of the philosophical systems evolved since Parmenides by comprehending them as limited determinations of the principle deliberately assumed by speculative science itself. This does not entail, to be sure, that this science itself is devoid of assumptions it cannot completely retrieve.

A criticism of Hegel that meets the demands implied by his own conception of philosophical criticism requires, first, that one dwell with the strength of his philosophy as much as possible and, second, that one's criticism proceed from assumptions neither completely internal nor external to it. These criteria, I think, might also be used to assess the ways in which philosophers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have attempted to move beyond Hegel.<sup>9</sup> It seems to me that philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Marx, Adorno, Heidegger, and Derrida – to begin with the continental tradition – have questioned Hegel in ways that meet the second demand. Many of them, especially Adorno, Heidegger, and Derrida, turned against Hegel's conception of absolute negativity in the name of a finitude considered to escape speculative science.<sup>10</sup> My reading of Hegel takes its bearings from this tradition and responds to the questions it raises.

However, the critical approaches to Hegel developed within the continental tradition can hardly be considered to meet the first criterion, if only because they largely neglected the *Science of Logic*. There once may have been good reasons for the overall focus on the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in twentieth-century philosophy. Yet this focus is strangely at odds with the aim of continental philosophy at large to deconstruct the premises of the metaphysical tradition.<sup>11</sup> Of course, Adorno, Heidegger, and Derrida did not have to engage in in-depth studies of the *Logic* to pursue their proper ends.<sup>12</sup> Yet by not doing so they largely preserved the prevailing 'metaphysical' image of Hegel so accommodating to all those who, since Hegel's death, either turned their back on him or attacked him where he was not present.

As I see it, the divide within contemporary philosophy is not necessarily narrowed by the systematic interest in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* displayed by post-analytic philosophy. Insofar as the analytic tradition is rooted in logical empiricism, it derives its impetus from an aversion to speculative thought as such. The legacy of American pragmatism, on the other hand, allowed philosophers such as Rorty to challenge the scientistic assumptions of analytic philosophy. Since this pragmatism itself originated, at least partly, in a critical appropriation of Kant and Hegel, it is quite understandable that philosophers such as Taylor, McDowell, and Brandom should have turned to Hegel in order to defend a non-dualistic, holistic, and dynamic perspective on science and society.<sup>13</sup> Notwithstanding their divergences, such post-analytic approaches to Hegel's philosophy basically appropriate some of its contents for the ends of epistemology (Brandom, McDowell) or political philosophy (Taylor). Although this 'pragmatic' use of Hegel's thought – facilitated by a stress on its Kantian strand – entails an implicit or explicit criticism of its allegedly obsolete 'metaphysical' strand, post-analytic approaches to Hegel do not aim to take issue with either Hegel or modernity as such.<sup>14</sup>

Whereas most continental and post-analytic philosophers hold that Hegel's philosophical system *contains* untenable metaphysical assumptions, it is my contention that neither tradition has seriously confronted the prevailing assumptions *about* Hegel's alleged metaphysics with the texts themselves. According to Hegel, as we have seen, philosophical criticism requires that one exhibit the strength of a philosophical system as much as one can. Only thus might one retrieve an assumption that, while inhabiting the system, cannot be appropriated by the system itself and, hence, expose the inherent limit of this system.

As indicated above, I propose to do this primarily by drawing on Hegel's early account of tragedy (Chapter 1). In order to expose the strength of Hegel's philosophy as a whole, on the other hand, I defend it against interpretations that either embrace or denounce its allegedly metaphysical claims. This is done primarily by arguing (in Chapter 2) that Hegel's *Science of Logic* transforms the legacy of metaphysics by radicalizing Kant's transcendental philosophy, that is, by considering the conceptual determinations constitutive of both thought and the objects of thought as the exclusive content of philosophy.

For various reasons I have deemed it necessary to center this book around the *Science of Logic*. In my view, one cannot comprehend Hegel's transformation of both metaphysics and transcendental philosophy without engaging with this work.<sup>15</sup> Since the *Logic* exhibits the principle of absolute negativity in the element of pure thought itself, it pre-eminently manifests the immense strength of this principle. Chapter 3 seeks to bring out this strength by considering how the *Logic* employs the various guises of absolute negativity to comprehend the essential moments of the history of pure thought. In order to elucidate the nature of Hegel's method, Chapter 4 examines Hegel's treatment of the concepts of infinity, being-for-itself, and contradiction. However, this chapter also has a critical purpose, for I argue here that Hegel could only resolve the conceptual oppositions constitutive of modern thought by recoiling, as it were, from the implications of his early conception of tragic conflicts.

Together, Chapters 2 to 4 offer an interpretation of the *Logic* that ranges from an account of its general thrust to a detailed examination of Hegel's speculative method. These chapters are complemented by Chapter 8, which investigates the conception of teleology presented in the concluding part of the *Logic*. It is primarily in this chapter that I transform Hegel's early insight into the tragic entanglement of contrary moments into a philosophical principle of its own.

This book is not concerned with the *Logic* alone, but examines the essential elements of Hegel's philosophy as a whole. Apart from the introductory chapter on tragedy, the sequence of its chapters roughly corresponds to the division of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* into a logic, philosophy of nature, and philosophy of spirit. However, these chapters address not so much the *Encyclopedia* itself as the transitions between its subsequent parts. Since these transitions seem to defy the system's threefold structure, I draw on a variety of other texts to clarify their significance.<sup>16</sup> In line with the book as a whole, the chapters devoted to Hegel's philosophies of nature and spirit have a

double focus. On the one hand, each of these chapters defends Hegel's thought against current misconceptions and criticisms. Turning against Hegel's predominant optimism, on the other hand, they reinterpret the relation between concept and time, spirit and nature, thought and language, and end and means, in terms of their tragic entanglement.

Thus, Chapter 5 interprets Hegel's conception of the relation between the *Logic* and the philosophies of nature and spirit in light of his conception of time. I here contend that Hegel regarded both the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the three parts of his mature system as circular reconstructions of the actual development of absolute knowing within the spheres of consciousness, pure thought, and spatio-temporal externality. Focusing on the concept of the animal, Chapter 6 examines Hegel's early philosophy of nature – almost completely ignored by commentators – to elucidate the relation between the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit. Since, in Hegel's view, language constitutes the primordial manifestation of spirit, Chapter 7 considers Hegel's conception of language. While Chapter 8 is devoted to Hegel's conception of teleology, Chapter 9 is concerned with the conception of history Hegel put forward in various lecture series and in the *Philosophy of Right*. This final chapter employs the logic of entanglement elaborated in Chapters 1 and 8 to radicalize Hegel's apparent hesitation as to the capacity of modernity to resolve its inherent conflicts. Drawing on the perspective developed in the preceding chapters, this chapter aims to bring out the tragic nature of conflicts such as those between universality and particularity, freedom and power, the individual and the community, or progress and tradition. It thus returns to the idea, introduced above, that philosophy must grasp its own time in thought. This book derives its energy, then, from the view that contemporary philosophy cannot comprehend its own time without comprehending its own history, and that it cannot comprehend this history without returning to Hegel.

Let me end by a brief note to the reader. In the attempt to keep external presuppositions at bay, my reading of Hegel often sets out from passages in which he himself reflects on the task and nature of his philosophy. Since these passages belong to the most difficult of Hegel's work, it demands patience and an open mind to solve the riddles they pose. In line with the perspective at stake in this book as a whole, the constructive and critical strands of which it consists are entangled to such an extent that neither strand necessarily dominates the other. I believe, however, that the reconstruction of Hegel's philosophy it presents can be read and assessed in its own right. Readers primarily interested in

scholarly discussions of Hegel may find Chapters 2 to 6 to be most relevant. The critical perspective on Hegel outlined above is foremost elaborated in Chapters 1, 4, 8, and 9. I have quite frequently modified the existing translations of Hegel's texts, not only to correct mistakes or bring out the implicated meaning of certain terms, but also to avoid unnecessarily artificial constructions.

# 1

## Tragedy

### 1. Introduction

There is no doubt that Hegel's philosophy is deeply marked by his understanding of Greek tragedy. Various texts, including the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, testify to the importance Hegel accorded to actual tragedies. However, the role of tragedy in Hegel's thought far exceeds the realm of concrete human experience and its aesthetic representation. This is already apparent from the early *Essay on Natural Law*, where Hegel refers to the tragedy 'which the absolute eternally enacts with itself' (NL 495/104). This chapter examines Hegel's account of tragedy in the *Essay on Natural Law* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in order to expose its implications for Hegel's philosophy as a whole. Both texts, it will be argued, concern the tragic conflict between the contrary determinations of a particular principle rather than the fate of its protagonists.

As I see it, Hegel considers Greek tragedy to reflect the way in which contrary conceptions of justice become destructive as soon as they are held to obtain absolutely. Since these moments are at once complementary and potentially contradictory, their initial distinction necessarily turns into their conflict. According to Hegel, tragedies articulate this conflict insofar as it is played out within the limits of ethical life. This perspective allows him, as we will see, to transform his account of tragic conflict into the very principle of his philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

Hegel's reading of the *Antigone* has often been criticized for its alleged identification of Antigone and Creon with the domains of the family and the state. Since Hegel regards the family as a necessary, yet subordinate moment of the state, it is often taken for granted that Hegel regards the relationship between Antigone and Creon as asymmetrical as well.<sup>2</sup>

I will contend, by contrast, that Hegel's account of the relationship between Antigone and Creon does not quite correspond to his account of the relation between family and state. Moreover, I will interpret the sections in the *Phenomenology* that concern the *Antigone* in light of Hegel's earliest remarks on tragedy in the *Essay on Natural Law*. Hegel here draws on one of Aeschylus' tragedies – *The Eumenides* – to contend that a tragic conflict can be resolved if, first, both contrary moments give up their purported independence and, second, if one of them establishes itself as the true principle of both. It was this dialectical interpretation of tragic conflicts, I hold, that allowed Hegel to incorporate the tragic into the principle of his dialectical method.<sup>3</sup>

Already in this early essay Hegel conceives of this principle as absolute negativity (NL 437/57). As we will see, however, this text also contains a strand that does not necessarily comply with this principle. According to this less conspicuous strand, the contrary determinations of ethical life are initially entangled in such a way that their effort at becoming independent threatens to entail their mutual destruction. On this view, their conflict does not necessarily yield their reconciliation. In line with the general aim of this book, this chapter is intended to extricate this tragic strand from Hegel's dialectical determination of tragic conflicts and, hence, to let it develop into a philosophical principle of its own.<sup>4</sup> While the paradigm to which this principle gives rise – the logic of entanglement – is as far removed from the realm of concrete human life as that of speculative science, it is, in the end, as much as the latter meant to provide this life with the means to critically reinterpret itself.<sup>5</sup> However, in this chapter I will only be able to prepare the ground for a perspective on human culture that affirms rather than effaces its tragic elements.

## 2. The *Essay on Natural Law*

The *Essay on Natural Law* sets out by criticizing both the empiricist and transcendental conceptions of natural law (NL 439/59). Whereas, Hegel holds, both approaches rely on the opposition between formal principles and empirical events, neither of them can be said to grasp their inner unity (437/57). According to Hegel, the absolute principle of ethical life actualizes itself by allowing its different moments to gain a certain independence and, subsequently, by resolving their opposition. Referring to this dynamic as absolute negativity, he maintains that philosophy cannot grasp the true nature of ethical life unless it adopts a philosophical perspective informed by this negativity as well.<sup>6</sup> Hegel's



subsequent draft of what he calls absolute ethical life (cf. 481/93) refers implicitly or explicitly to the historical manifestations of this life in the Greek, Roman, and Christian world. It is clear, however, that his analysis primarily concerns the dynamic that one way or another informs the ways in which human life organizes itself.

Hegel wishes to show that the absolute principle of ethical life must distinguish its contrary determinations in order to establish itself as their unity. Just as an organism is constituted by the difference between soul and body, a community must distinguish itself into different classes, such that one of them is devoted to the absolute principle of ethical life, that is, to freedom, while the other is devoted to the satisfaction of particular physical needs.<sup>7</sup> Hegel's references to Plato and Aristotle indicate that he considers the Greek *polis* to embody this primordial twofold self-organization of ethical life adequately. Although he recognizes that further differentiations may occur (490/100), he focuses on the way in which a community organizes itself by dividing itself into two classes, each of which adheres to a different determination of the absolute good. Hegel also refers to these two moments of ethical life as its organic and inorganic nature (487/98). Just like a plant subsists by means of mechanical and chemical processes, an ethical organism subsists by means of a class devoted to satisfying its physical needs. According to Hegel, absolute ethical life can only actualize itself by letting its two complementary natures gain independence. The system of property, he holds,

must constitute itself in a class of its own, and in that case must be able to expand in its whole length and breadth, really separate and isolated from the class of the nobility. (492/102)

Thus, a truly ethical community – whose basic features Hegel seems to recognize in bourgeois societies – should allow the inorganic nature of ethical life to develop freely. However, this realm should not be allowed to transgress its proper bounds. Since the rampant growth of inorganic ethical life would endanger the health of the ethical organism as a whole, the opposition between the two natures of ethical life should be subordinated to the absolute principle of ethical life as such. This is to say that the state, represented by king and government, should at once recognize the vital importance of the inorganic moment of ethical life and prevent this moment from holding sway over the society as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

Insofar as the absolute principle of ethical life succeeds in subordinating its inorganic nature to its organic nature, it manifests, Hegel notes, the principle of absolute negativity:

In absolute ethical life, infinity – or form as the absolutely negative – is nothing other than the subjugation itself [*das Bezwingen selbst*] ... taken up into its absolute concept. (481/93)

For Hegel, the absolute principle of ethical life can only be reconciled with its contrary determination if the latter gains independence, yet does so without thwarting its proper ends. This reconciliation, he notes, is constituted by the

right which ethical life concedes to its inorganic nature and to the subterranean powers by handing over and sacrificing to the latter one part of itself. (494/101)

One might wonder what these powers are and why Hegel would summon them up at this point. Laws protecting the worldly interests of citizens would seem to have little to do with the underworld. Yet it now turns out that, right from the outset, Hegel's analysis of ethical life took its bearings from a conflict within ethical life that dates back to when the Greek *polis* first began to reflect upon itself. This initial conflict did not unfold between the realms of freedom and private interests, but rather between an archaic, pre-legal determination of justice based on kinship, rituals, and revenge on the one hand, and a deliberately established determination of justice based on individual responsibility, equality, and rational deliberation on the other. I will refer to these contrary ethical paradigms as 'archaic' and 'rational' respectively.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Hegel seems to regard both the realm of worldly interests and the archaic sense of justice as modes of the inorganic nature of absolute ethical life. Just as Greek culture at some point became confronted with the inherent conflict between civilized public life and an archaic system of justice, later societies, having resolved this initial ethical conflict, were confronted with the conflict between true ethical life and a realm defined by the private interests of citizens.<sup>10</sup>

Although Hegel devotes less than two pages to the conflict between the rational and the archaic determinations of justice that unfolded within Greek culture, I would contend that his analysis of ethical life is molded from beginning to end by the way in which Greek ethical life

struggled to overcome the conflict between its contrary elements. Or, to be more precise, Hegel's interpretation of this initial conflict allowed him to take it as an outstanding example of the conflict inherent in ethical life as such. In his remarks on the conflict between the two modes of Greek ethical life, Hegel explicitly draws on Aeschylus' trilogy, the *Oresteia*, and especially on its final part, *The Eumenides*. The subterranean powers that unexpectedly break to the surface of Hegel's essay apparently refer to the Furies that haunted Orestes after he killed his mother. Before addressing Hegel's remarks on this tragedy, I will briefly recall its content.

### 3. The *Oresteia*

According to Hegel, every community possesses a certain awareness of its ultimate principles, an awareness that is primarily laid down in its customs, moral values, laws, and political institutions. Whenever a community goes on to reflect on these its principles – through public debate, art, religion, or philosophy – it can be considered to become conscious of itself.<sup>11</sup> Hegel conceives of tragedy as the pre-eminent way in which fifth-century Greece achieved insight into the conflict inherent in its complementary determinations of justice.

The first two tragedies of the *Oresteia* – *Agamemnon* and *The Libation Bearers* – can be said to represent tragic conflicts that its heroes are unable to resolve because they identify with a one-sided determination of justice. Agamemnon, faced with the dilemma of killing his daughter or forsaking his duties as a commander of the Greek war fleet, one-sidedly identifies with his role in public life and sacrifices not just his daughter, but the value of kinship altogether. Upon returning from Troy, he is killed by his wife Clytaemnestra and her lover Aegisthus. Although multiple motives may have prompted her crime, Clytaemnestra's revenge of her daughter's murder indicates that she forsakes her public role as a wife and blindly identifies with the values of kinship. The archaic ethical paradigm, defined by the absolute value of kinship, demands that murdering one's child be paid for with one's life. Clytaemnestra claims that her deed 'swept from these halls the murder, the sin, and the fury', but she might have realized that her act of vengeance would provoke her son Orestes to avenge his father's killing.<sup>12</sup> The figure of Orestes can be taken to represent the question of whether the ethical realm defined by kinship can be reconciled with the ethical realm defined by public life, the equality of all citizens, and the right to a fair trial.<sup>13</sup>

Orestes, having murdered his mother, wanders around for years, haunted by the Furies who demand that he be punished for his crime against his kin. But since Apollo told him to kill his mother and wants to keep him alive despite his crime, the question arises whether Apollo will succeed in stealing the prey of the Furies from their clutches.<sup>14</sup> This question is answered in *The Eumenides*, which depicts the trial of Orestes held in Athens and presided over by Athena. The tie vote of the Athenian people, represented by the jury, would imply that both ethical powers should be allowed to co-exist. Hegel suggests, however, that their true reconciliation can only be brought about by a mode of wisdom higher than the human one (496/105). Athena's additional vote delivers Orestes to Apollo, while she at the same time dissuades the Furies from taking revenge on the city. Thus, she disentangles the two ethical realms not just by letting them co-exist, but by ordaining the Furies to accept a subordinate place in the ethical life of the city. Forced to give up their destructive power, they assent to use their power only to benefit the ethical community as a whole. As they enjoy the sight of Athena from the altar erected to their honor, their 'savage nature' is pacified (496/105).

#### 4. Tragic Entanglements

All is well that ends well, or so it seems. Yet if we take a closer look at the *Essay on Natural Law* things turn out to be more complicated. For Hegel here suggests that rational ethical life can only actualize itself by annulling its entanglement in the inorganic nature of ethical life:

Tragedy consists in this, that ethical nature divides off [*von sich abtrennt*] its inorganic nature, as a fate, and posits it over against itself in order not to become entangled with it [*damit sie sich nicht mit ihr verwickelt*]; and by acknowledging this fate in the struggle against it, ethical nature is reconciled with the divine being as the unity of both natures.<sup>15</sup>

Hegel here seems to be arguing that in Greek culture the rational principle of ethical life was initially bound up with the archaic mode of ethical life to such an extent that it could not manifest its proper nature. As long as the archaic mode of ethical life prevailed, it remained a mere principle. In order to actualize itself, this rational principle had to annul its initial entanglement with the inorganic nature of the ethical. However, by thus positing its contrary moment over against itself, the rational

principle of ethical life not only freed itself from the force that prevented its own unfolding, but at once deprived itself of the force to which it owed its life. For, Hegel notes, it can only prosper 'in being connected with this other life' (495/104). Just as an organism depends on inorganic processes to preserve itself, a society cannot flourish unless it feeds on archaic ethical life. Thus, Hegel suggests that Greek citizens were supposed to base their actions not only on rational deliberations, but equally on age-old rituals and a deep fear of pollution. Such a fear might deter them from committing such outrageous deeds as murdering one's kin.

At any rate, a society that adopts rational principles as its ethical paradigm cannot flourish, in Hegel's view, without its inorganic counterpart. Yet neither can rational ethical life truly establish itself as long as it remains tangled up in archaic ethical life. How, then, could Greek culture find a way out of this entanglement? According to Hegel, as we have seen, the rational principle of ethical life initially had to allow archaic ethical life to hold sway over individuals and societies. In other words, this rational principle had to hand over a part of its power to archaic ethical life. Since archaic ethical life was the first to have occurred historically, this moment must have preceded the constitution of Greek culture as we know it. Only when rational ethical life became, as it were, aware of itself – and this is what happened as the Greek *polis* developed – could it attempt to annul its initial entanglement in archaic ethical life. Thus, in order to constitute its own purity, rational ethical life had to unwind out of its contrary determination. Rational ethical life, Hegel notes, 'has all at once recognized the right of inorganic ethical life and cleansed itself of it' (NL 495/104).

Yet by thus opposing its inorganic nature, rational ethical life threatened to deprive itself of a vital moment of ethical life as such. It could save itself from an untimely death, Hegel suggests, only by recognizing archaic ethical life as a necessary moment of ethical life as such. This means that rational ethical life had to annul the destructive effects of archaic ethical life, that is, to subjugate its proper force to the end of the *polis* as a whole. The two natures of ethical life need to be unified not by being folded back into one another, but in such a manner that the absolute principle of ethical life turns archaic ethical life 'into its reconciled and living body, which, as body, simultaneously dwells in the realm of difference and transience' (495/104–5). Thus, whereas Hegel considers the rational 'soul' of ethical life to actualize itself by establishing the unity of its contrary determinations, he suggests that archaic ethical life actualizes itself by acknowledging rational ethical

life as its ultimate principle, that is, by reducing itself to a subordinate moment of it.

In sum, Hegel's earliest account of tragedy comprehends the actualization of ethical life by distinguishing between (1) the initial entanglement of its contrary determinations, (2) the unfolding of their opposition, and (3) the subjugation of archaic ethical life to rational ethical life. The second and third moments announce the conception of dialectics predominant in Hegel's later works. After 1803, however, Hegel seems to abandon the view that the conflict between contrary moments results from their attempt at annulling their initial entanglement. The *Essay on Natural Law* maintains that the contrary determinations of ethical life can be reconciled *despite* their initial entanglement. This is to say that Hegel from the outset steered clear of the possibly troubling implications of this notion. The dialectical reconciliation of contrary determinations is still better secured, however, if their initial unity rather than their mutual implication is posited as the absolute beginning of their subsequent polarization. This apparently minimal, yet decisive shift occurs in Hegel's famous reflection on natural ethical life in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

## 5. The *Antigone*

The *Essay on Natural Law* examines conceptions of justice in both contemporary philosophy and the *Eumenides* in order to comprehend the mode of negativity articulated in the latter as the absolute principle of both ethical life and philosophy. It might be argued that this early text, without dwelling on the intermittent stages, thus bridges the gap between the mode of self-consciousness achieved in natural ethical life and, on the other hand, the mode of self-consciousness achieved in speculative science itself. The *Phenomenology of Spirit*, by contrast, seeks to reconstruct the *totality* of the ways in which consciousness has so far determined its ultimate principle. This reconstruction is based on the idea that a specific mode of thought will always turn out to imply a contradiction between the absolute principle of thought and a particular determination of this principle. Hegel, going along with each of these moments, each time pushes a certain mode of spirit to the point where it must acknowledge that it had all along mistaken a one-sided determination of this principle for this principle itself. Thus, the mode of thought characterized as sense-certainty posits the content of its immediate impressions – the 'this' – as the absolute principle of knowledge and is subsequently forced to give up this position (cf. *Phen* 76/64). As long

as thought has not reached the position of speculative science itself, its inherent contradiction will impel it to abandon its finite presupposition, thus originating a less one-sided mode of thought. Although each of these modes has actually occurred in the history of spirit, Hegel abstracts from their historical appearance in order to reconstruct the totality of possible modes of thought.

Contrary to subjective modes of thought such as sense-certainty or the understanding, modes of thought that occur as the self-awareness of a community do not derive their content from the external world. A community relates to its world as to itself (Phen 288/263), thus truly enacting itself as spirit (290/265). Hegel refers to the values that allow members of a particular community to identify with that community – and to act according to rules – as the sphere of ethical life. Insofar as a community relates to these values as handed down to it since time immemorial, this sphere presents itself as a natural product rather than as the result of rational deliberation. Hegel insists, however, that even these values are brought about by the community itself and do not exist outside of it:

What observation knew as a *given* object in which the self had no part, is here a given custom, but [this custom is] a reality which is at the same time the deed and the work of those who discover it. (302/276)

According to Hegel, a culture defines itself primarily through its customs and laws. Far from projecting a pre-established form onto an unformed content, he identifies, as it were, with the actual self-comprehension of Greek culture in order to raise its essence into the element of pure thought and, hence, to comprehend its inherent limit.<sup>16</sup> It is not by coincidence that the *Phenomenology* draws on Greek tragedies to articulate the essence of natural ethical life as such. For Hegel, these tragedies pre-eminently reflect the conflict that occurs whenever the ultimate principle of ethical life is determined in an immediate way.

Although the *Phenomenology* comprehends the tragic essence of natural ethical life through the *Antigone* rather than *The Eumenides*, Hegel's account basically develops along the same lines as the *Essay on Natural Law*.<sup>17</sup> The *Phenomenology* no less considers Greek culture to rely on an archaic and a rational determination of ethical life. In Greek culture, Hegel holds, justice occurred not only through the government of the city, but also through 'the undivided spirit of the individual who had suffered wrong'. This is to say that the spirit of someone who had

been murdered, represented as a 'subterranean power', was held to take revenge on his murderer (303/277). Hegel now refers to the ultimate principle of ethical life – that is, the good – as the ethical substance (292/267) and to its complementary determinations as divine law and human law (293/267–68). Each of these determinations occurs at once in the form of a law and in the form of human beings who identify with this law (293/267).

Contrary to the *Essay on Natural Law*, the *Phenomenology* connects the distinction between human and divine law not just to that between state and family (293–94/268), but also to that between men and women.<sup>18</sup> According to Hegel's reconstruction of the tragic self-comprehension of Greek culture, ethical life is initially bound up with nature to such an extent that men and women cannot but identify with one of these laws:

[E]thical consciousness ... is determined to belong to either divine or human law. The immediacy of its decision is something in itself, and therefore has at once the significance of something natural ...; nature assigns one sex to one law and the other to the other law. (305/304, cf. 301/275–76)

This by no means implies, however, that this quasi-natural identification is in accordance with the principle of ethical life as such. On the contrary, this identification merely characterizes *immediate* ethical life, and for that reason is doomed to be ruined.<sup>19</sup> An ethical act resulting from such a one-sided identification, Hegel notes,

contains the moment of crime, because it does not sublate the *natural* allocation of the two laws to the two sexes, but rather ... remains within the sphere of natural immediacy. Such an act turns this one-sidedness into guilt, a guilt that consists in seizing only one side of the essence, while adopting a negative attitude toward the other, that is, violating it.<sup>20</sup>

According to Hegel, a conflict between contrary ethical paradigms only truly unfolds when individuals are impelled to act, for any acting presupposes the identification with a one-sided determination of what is good in itself (304/279). The *Antigone* represents this moment by the contrary ways in which Antigone and Creon react to the death of a kin. Antigone identifies one-sidedly with the divine law that obliges her to bury her brother Polynices. Her uncle Creon, for his part, identifies one-sidedly with the law according to which traitors have forfeited their



right to be buried. Precisely because Polynices is both at once, Antigone and Creon, I would like to suggest, can no longer respect the 'natural' limits of the divine and human determination of what is good in itself. Just as Oedipus, at once her father and brother, failed to recognize his kin in the man he killed and the woman he married, so Antigone does not recognize the treacherous citizen in her beloved brother (cf. Phen 309/283). Conscious of only one side of the ethical substance, the death of Polynices impels her to determine this side as the ultimate principle of ethical life as such, that is, to completely negate the contrary determination of ethical life. Creon, negating the truth of archaic justice, falls prey to the same *hubris* as his niece and daughter-in-law to be. Hegel's view on the actual conflict between these one-sided laws seems to be consistent with his earlier remarks on *The Eumenides*. It is not so clear, however, whether this also holds true for his description of, on the one hand, the mode of natural ethical life from which this conflict emerged and, on the other, its outcome. In order to determine to what extent the conception of the tragic developed in the *Phenomenology* differs from the remarks in the *Essay on Natural Law*, I will consider these moments in some detail.

Contrary to the *Essay on Natural Law*, the *Phenomenology* suggests that Greek culture has known a phase where the realms of the family and the state mutually affirmed and completed one another.<sup>21</sup> Yet Hegel does not spell out whether this initial harmony extended to the archaic and rational determinations of justice usually associated with these realms, that is, to the contrary moments of the ethical substance as such. It is not by chance, I would like to suggest, that Hegel in this context no longer refers to the initial predominance of archaic justice in Greek culture. We have seen that the *Essay on Natural Law* maintains, albeit obliquely, that the rational determination of justice could only establish itself by disentangling itself from the archaic determination of justice. This view is almost completely erased in the *Phenomenology*. At one point, however, Hegel notes that

[t]he law which is manifest [to ethical self-consciousness] is in the essence tied to [*verknüpft mit*] its opposite; the essence is the unity of both; but the deed has only carried out one law in contrast to the other.<sup>22</sup>

Hegel here uses the verb *verknüpfen* to indicate that divine and human law constitute mutually dependent determinations of justice as such. In accordance with the *Essay on Natural Law* he distinguishes between

(1) something like the initial 'tie' between divine and human law, (2) their actual opposition, and (3) the dialectical unity that is to result from that opposition. However, the initial 'tie' between divine and human law is interpreted no longer in terms of their *entanglement*, but rather in terms of their *unity*. This latter term, covering over the initial entanglement of the contrary determinations of ethical life, suggests that the essence of ethical life divides off its contrary moments *only at a second stage*. According to this reinterpretation,

the ethical essence has split itself into two laws, and consciousness, as an undivided attitude toward the law, is assigned only to one. (307/281)

While Hegel in the *Phenomenology* repeatedly refers to the essential unity preceding the opposition between divine and human law, he does not determine *in which way* the essence of ethical life contains these its contrary determinations. This indeterminacy allows him to maintain, I would suggest, that the movement in which these determinations actualize themselves necessarily results in their reconciliation. This is certainly in agreement with the outcome of *The Eumenides* as well as with Hegel's account of it in the *Essay on Natural Law*. Yet his earlier references to the initial entanglement of archaic and rational ethical life might have complicated his attempt at converting the essence of tragic conflicts into the principle of speculative science as such. In my view, Hegel could only achieve this transformation by replacing the initial entanglement of contrary determinations with their as yet implicit unity.

A second difference between the two texts concerns the *outcome* of tragic conflicts. If one wishes to develop a dialectical interpretation of tragic conflicts *The Eumenides* seems a much better place to start than the *Antigone*. For whereas *The Eumenides* unambiguously maintains that archaic ethical life must yield to the sway of rational ethical life, the *Antigone* rather emphasizes the *symmetry* between the tragic destinies of its protagonists and hence the truly tragic character of their collision. In accordance with at least one strand of the play, Hegel maintains in the *Phenomenology* that

both sides suffer the same destruction. For neither power has any advantage over the other that would make it a more essential moment of the substance. (Phen 310–11/285)

The collision between both moments results not so much in the victory of the one over the other as in their balance:

The victory of one power and its character, and the defeat of the other side, would thus be only the part and the incomplete work, a work that advances relentlessly toward the equilibrium of both. Only in the subjugation [*Unterwerfung*] of both sides alike is absolute right accomplished and has the ethical substance manifested itself as the negative power that absorbs [*verschlingt*] both sides.<sup>23</sup>

Hegel here maintains that the inherent negativity which forces both determinations of the ethical substance to recognize their one-sidedness does not so much result in the subjugation of the one to the other as in the subjugation of both sides to the ethical substance as such. With respect to *The Eumenides* Hegel had equally pointed out that Athena transcends the limited positions of Apollo and the Furies. Whereas Apollo represents rational ethical life insofar as it is opposed to archaic ethical life, Athena represents rational ethical life insofar as it has resolved that opposition. Yet Hegel's view of the *Antigone* seems to differ from the one developed in the *Essay on Natural Law* in that he now puts much more emphasis on the symmetry between the contrary determinations of ethical life.

In order to decide whether this apparent shift really is one, it should first be noted that Hegel in the passage just quoted does not say whether the equilibrium of both ethical principles can actually be reached within the element of natural ethical life; the context rather suggests that it cannot.<sup>24</sup> Yet there is, I think, a more important reason for Hegel's emphasis on the equal destinies of Antigone and Creon. Creon's determination of the ultimate good does not coincide, in Hegel's view, with rational ethical life as such, but merely with an abstract moment of it. As soon as Creon actually defends the interests of the state, he excludes rather than incorporates the contrary determination of rational ethical life. For this reason, he does not represent the vital interests of the ethical community as a whole. Since Creon abstracts from the essence of ethical life just as much as Antigone, both protagonists are forced to recognize the one-sidedness of their positions. Thus, the *Essay on Natural Law* considers the rational mode of ethical life to pertain to both the *polis* as such (Athena) and to one of its contrary moments (Apollo). This distinction allows Hegel – in line with *The Eumenides* – to emphasize the dialectical reconciliation of archaic and rational ethical life. The

*Phenomenology*, by contrast, focuses on the conflict between archaic ethical life on the one hand (Antigone) and an abstract determination of rational ethical life on the other (Creon). This allows Hegel – in line with the *Antigone* – to emphasize the symmetry of the movement in which these contrary determinations attempt to actualize themselves.

This is true, however, only of those passages in the *Phenomenology* that explicitly pertain to the conflict between Antigone and Creon. As self-conscious human beings they are incapable, Hegel notes, ‘of surviving the destruction of this ethical power by its opposite’ (Phen 310/284). This may have been another reason for Hegel to suggest that the contrary determinations of justice cannot be reconciled by Antigone and Creon themselves. However, when Hegel a few pages later discusses the relation between the state and the family in general terms, he conceives of their conflict in a quite different way. Echoing his earlier interpretation of *The Eumenides*, he now maintains that the human law, represented by the government,

maintains itself by absorbing into itself [*in sich aufzehrt*] ... the separation into independent families presided over by womankind, and by keeping them dissolved into the continuous fluidity proper to it. (313/287–88)

A state that absorbs the sphere of the family by restraining its efforts at becoming independent can hardly be considered to facilitate the equilibrium of both. Yet even according to this view the state is dependent on the sphere of the family, since the family issues the state with the individuals it needs to maintain itself (313/288). Thus, the sphere of the family, which Hegel identifies with that of particular interests, on the one hand belongs essentially to the state as such, yet on the other threatens the proper interests of the latter. That is why the state – or the moment of universality – always tends to posit the family as an element foreign to it:

The community, however, can only maintain itself by repressing this spirit of individualism, and, because this spirit is an essential moment, it at once creates this spirit; due to its repressive attitude toward it, it creates this spirit as a hostile principle. (Phen 314/288)

According to Hegel, the state must restrain the sphere of the family, but tends to do this by positing the sphere of the family over against itself.

By doing so, the state reduces itself to a one-sided principle as well, that is, to abstract universality. In order to resolve the ensuing opposition between state and family, the state must recognize the family as one of its essential moments, and the family must accept the limits of its proper sphere. This is not to say, however, that this mutual recognition – which, to be sure, does not equal the victory of the one over the other – implies the complete symmetry of state and family. I would contend that Hegel even in the *Phenomenology* conceives of the relation between these contrary determinations of ethical life as symmetrical only insofar as both must give up their spurious independence.

In his later *Lectures on Aesthetics* Hegel seems to emphasize the symmetry between the two spheres of natural ethical life – and hence the tragic nature of their collision – even more than in the *Phenomenology*. Hegel here considers the most perfect tragic conflict to occur when a tragic character opposes a principle that constitutes an essential moment of his or her proper existence. This is clearly the case in the *Antigone*: both Antigone and Creon contain within themselves the moment against which they mutually stand. Antigone is not only her brother's sister, but also the daughter of a king. Creon is not only the king of Thebes, but also a father and husband. Thus, although Antigone and Creon identify with the law assigned to them by their sex, they harbor within themselves the law of which they deny the truth. Insofar as they are impelled to act, however, they cannot but relate to the opposed law as a law that is foreign to them:

Thus, both contain within themselves that against which they mutually rise, and they are taken hold of and broken by something that belongs to the sphere of their own being. (Aesth III, 549/II, 1217–18)

Much more clearly than in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel here argues that either determination of the ethical substance contains its contrary determination within itself. Attempting to actualize itself, however, either determination initially posits its contrary over against itself instead of recognizing it as essential to its own being.

Yet the fact that both contrary moments from the outset contain their contrary within themselves does not imply that they achieve the synthesis of their contrary moments *in exactly the same way*. First, Hegel refers to the mutual implication of contrary determinations only with regard to Antigone and Creon, that is, not with regard to the contrary determinations of ethical life as such. With regard to the latter, Hegel generally

seems to hold that rational ethical life (conceived as the absolute principle of ethical life) contains archaic ethical life as one of its necessary moments. Yet he does not consider archaic ethical life to contain rational ethical life as one of its necessary moments as well. Or, in terms of the *Phenomenology*, whereas the state represents both the absolute principle of ethical life and one of its contrary moments, the family merely represents the contrary of these moments. Second, even if both determinations of ethical life were to contain their contrary within themselves, rational ethical life might still be considered more essential than archaic ethical life. If this is Hegel's view, as I think it is, then the *Lectures on Aesthetics* no less than the *Phenomenology* conceive of the tragic conflict between the contrary determinations of ethical life as symmetrical only as far as the negative moment of its resolution is concerned. Even though these determinations cannot actually be reconciled within the finite element of ethical life, Hegel conceives of their conflict in light of the movement that yields their synthetic unity. I will argue in the next section that this dialectical comprehension of tragedy can be traced back to one of the strands in Greek tragedy itself.

## 6. The Logic of Entanglement

According to the *Essay on Natural Law*, Greek tragedies represent the conflict that emerged when the rational organization of ethical life unfolded at the expense of the prevailing archaic organization of ethical life. Only when the initial complementarity of the contrary determinations of ethical life turned into their conflict did Greek culture begin to raise the question concerning their relation. Greek tragedies can be considered to explore the possible answers to that question. Some of them, including the *Oresteia*, interpret the tragic conflict between the opposed determinations of ethical life in view of its dialectical resolution. Others, including the *Antigone*, represent the same tragic conflict without indicating how the mutual destruction of the one-sided determinations of the good might yield their reconciliation.<sup>25</sup>

Now it might be argued, briefly put, that Greek philosophy from Plato onward followed in the wake of the self-reflection occurring in tragedy by explicitly reflecting on the principles of human life as such. More precisely, the mode of philosophy that emerged after the golden age of tragedy can be regarded as further developing one of the distinctive strands of tragedy, namely the attempt to downplay the tragic nature of the conflict between contrary determinations.<sup>26</sup> When philosophy intensified its theoretical investigations of reality as such, it subdued

not so much the conflict between rational and archaic ethical life as the conflict between ontological determinations such as essence and appearance, identity and difference, truth and opinion, reason and will, soul and body, spirit and nature, inside and outside. In line with the dialectical strand of Greek tragedy, philosophy thus sought to subordinate the proper force of the latter moments to the self-actualization of the former.

With regard to both the *Essay on Natural Law* and the *Phenomenology* I have argued that Hegel's dialectical interpretation of the conflict inherent in natural ethical life follows Aeschylus' *Oresteia* by downplaying the radically tragic nature of this conflict.<sup>27</sup> Seen in this way, Hegel's philosophy is representative of the optimism that has dominated the history of philosophy from Plato onward. His position differs from that of his predecessors, however, in at least two respects. First, Hegel explicitly reflected on the essence of tragic conflicts by dwelling on actual tragedies. Second, his dialectical determination of this essence allowed him to raise the latter into the absolute principle of speculative science. Insofar as philosophy deliberately lets itself be guided by this principle, as Hegel's does, it will comprehend its object – whatever it is – as the effort to actualize itself by differentiating itself from within and resolving the tragic conflict between its contrary determinations. It is my contention that Hegel could raise the essence of tragic conflicts into the absolute principle of speculative science only by abandoning the idea of their initial entanglement and, accordingly, by restricting the symmetry of contrary determinations to the negative moment of their reconciliation.

By no means do I wish to suggest that Hegel could have developed his speculative system in any other way. Yet in order to argue that Hegel's way of converting the essence of tragic conflicts into a philosophical principle is not the only possible one, I will once again return to the *Essay on Natural Law*. As was indicated above, this text offers a lead to reinterpret tragic conflicts which is rather in line with the tragic strand of Greek tragedy. So far I have retrieved two elements of Hegel's conception of tragedy which, if further developed, might complicate his dialectical determination of tragic conflicts and so his conception of the ultimate principle of speculative science. The first element, abandoned after 1803, concerns the idea that the contrary determinations of ethical life are entangled to such an extent that their separation threatens to entail their mutual destruction. The second element concerns the idea that each of these determinations from the very outset contains its contrary within itself. This latter idea became part and parcel of

Hegel's conception of dialectics long before it emerged in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*. Yet this idea too could be incorporated into the absolute principle of speculative science only by warding off its possibly disturbing implications.

The *Essay on Natural Law*, for its part, avoids such implications by suggesting that rational ethical life possesses a principle that is initially tangled up in archaic ethical life, while the latter is nothing but a manifestation of this very principle. Even though archaic ethical life was the first to have actually manifested itself, its old age does not imply that its reign should be perpetuated. Since it lacks a principle of its own, in Hegel's view, it can never seriously threaten the necessary unfolding of rational ethical life.<sup>28</sup> We have seen, however, that the *Essay on Natural Law* also refers to the two *natures* of ethical life (NL 495/104). This might be taken to imply that the inorganic mode of ethical life constitutes not just an externalization of the rational principle of ethical life, but rather possesses a force of its own. Seen in this way, there is no reason why the one nature of ethical life should necessarily possess the force to subordinate the other, and not the other way round. According to Hegel, the rational mode of ethical life initially established itself by expelling the archaic mode of ethical life from itself. Yet it might just as well be argued that the rational mode of ethical life could only become a true principle – rather than a mere mode – by expelling its contrary from itself and, hence, by reducing the latter to one of its determinations. But why should this not be equally true for archaic ethical life?

According to the *Lectures on Aesthetics* both Antigone and Creon contain the contrary determination of justice within themselves. Hegel seems to maintain that this holds true of the protagonists only and not of the ethical laws to which they adhere. Nothing prevents us, however, from conceiving of the archaic and rational determinations of ethical life *themselves* as containing their contrary within themselves. On this view, archaic ethical life may just as well be seen as aspiring to become the unique principle of ethical life. If, then, the initial entanglement of the two modes of ethical life should be such that neither has yet established itself as a principle, then there is no reason why one mode of ethical life rather than the other should succeed in establishing itself as the reigning principle of both.

For Hegel, the struggle between the contrary modes of ethical life *begins* at the moment that the rational mode has already determined itself as the true principle of ethical life as such. On this view, the proper force of archaic ethical life ultimately cannot thwart the self-actualization of rational ethical life. Thus, whereas Hegel on the one



hand drew attention to the initial entanglement of contrary determinations, he on the other defined this entanglement in terms of a principle enfolded into its most abstract manifestation, which, as such, is unable to thwart the subsequent actualization of the former. It might be argued that Hegel thus effaced a more primordial way in which opposed moments struggle to overcome their entanglement. This struggle might be reinterpreted, I would like to suggest, as the effort of two opposed moments to become more than just moments, that is, to establish themselves as a principle capable of incorporating its contrary and so of holding sway over ethical life as such. If both moments of ethical life are initially enfolded into one another *in such a way* that neither is necessarily capable of positing its contrary as a mere secondary moment, then their subsequent struggle to disentangle themselves from their contrary does not necessarily entail the victory of rational ethical life over archaic ethical life. Seen from this perspective, both modes of ethical life would at once make possible and threaten to make impossible the actualization of the other.

Hegel, we have seen, touched upon the initial entanglement of contrary determinations only with regard to the element of natural ethical life. On the other hand, he converted the prevailing strand of his conception of tragic conflicts into the very core of his philosophical method. Yet nothing prevents us from repeating this twofold gesture by, first, considering the entanglement of contrary determinations as essential to tragic conflicts as such and, second, by converting this very entanglement into a basic philosophical principle.

The logic of entanglement at stake in this book develops this principle into a philosophical perspective intended to account for the utter precariousness of human life. According to this logic, everything that seeks to actualize itself – whether a concrete mode of spirit or a pure concept – will attempt to annul the initial entanglement of its contrary determinations. If neither of these determinations has as yet established itself as the unique principle of both, then their conflict is not necessarily resolved. On this view, that which philosophy has usually regarded as mere secondary moments might turn out to be more principle-like – that is, more archaic – than that which purports to be the true beginning and end of whatever it is that actualizes itself. This logic by no means entails, however, that these alleged secondary moments, ‘furious’ as they may be, will necessarily gain the power to corrode their allegedly primary counterparts. It only offers a way to account for the utter precariousness of the relation between contrary determinations of a particular principle.

According to Hegel, Antigone and Creon suffer the same destruction (Phen 310–11/285) and are destroyed by something that belongs to their own being. Yet the only way for Hegel to tarry, so to speak, with the tragic nature of their conflict consisted in subordinating their mutual destruction to the movement in which rational ethical life, first, establishes itself as the absolute principle of ethical life and, second, actualizes itself by incorporating its contrary moment into itself. The force of this dialectical principle to dissolve one-sided positions and fixed oppositions nowhere manifests itself more purely than in the *Science of Logic*. That is why I will leave, at least for a while, the realm of tragedy and turn to the realm of purely conceptual thought.

# 2

## Logic

### 1. Introduction

Over the past few decades various attempts have been made to defend Hegel's philosophy against those who denounce it as crypto-theological, dogmatic metaphysics. This was done primarily by foregrounding Hegel's indebtedness to Kant. This emphasis on Hegel's Kantian roots has resulted in a partial shift from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* to the *Science of Logic* that can only be welcomed.<sup>1</sup> However, those who have argued for a non-metaphysical interpretation of Hegel tend to lose sight, in my view, of the ontological stakes of both Kant's transcendental logic and Hegel's speculative logic.<sup>2</sup> This chapter offers an interpretation of the general thrust of the *Science of Logic* that undercuts the opposition between non-metaphysical and metaphysical interpretations. It is non-metaphysical in that it considers the *Logic* to comprehend such concepts as have been developed throughout the history of thought to achieve knowledge of nature, spirit, and thought itself. In this regard the *Logic* can indeed be regarded as a radical transformation of Kant's transcendental logic. Contrary to other non-metaphysical interpretations of Hegel, however, I consider the *Logic* to share the intention of both former ontology and Kant's transcendental analytic to exhibit the concepts that determine what can become an object at all. For this reason, I propose to read both Kant's transcendental analytic and Hegel's speculative logic as non-metaphysical modes of ontology.

In order to expose the basic thrust of the *Logic* I will set out from Hegel's own understanding of its relation to Kant's transcendental logic. I do this by first examining sections of the *Differenzschrift* (1801) and *Faith and Knowledge* (1802). Both texts can be considered to investigate the possibility of purely rational knowledge after Kant's critique

of metaphysics. This knowledge can only be achieved, in Hegel's view, if the capacity of thought to generate contents is assigned not just to synthetic a priori judgments, but to reason as such.<sup>3</sup> The main part of the chapter then examines sections of the *Science of Logic* that reflect on the relation between transcendental and speculative logic. Since both Kant and Hegel distinguish their logic from the rationalist metaphysics of Leibniz, Wolff, and their followers, I also consider the relation between Hegel's logic and former metaphysics.

According to the *Encyclopedia*, this metaphysics relied on 'the view which the understanding takes of the objects of reason' (Enc I, § 27). I will argue that Hegel's *Logic* moves beyond his earlier works by comprehending reason itself as a merely subjective guise of the principle of self-determination that underlies any mode of thought. This step allowed Hegel to comprehend each pure concept as animated by the effort to resolve the opposition between its contrary determinations. As I see it, however, an account of the *Logic* cannot abstract from his conception of the history that first generated these concepts.<sup>4</sup> Although the *Logic* does not explicitly reflect on this issue, I will contend that Hegel moves beyond Kant by tracing back the totality of pure concepts to the history of pure thought rather than to pure self-consciousness.<sup>5</sup> It is only by considering the intricate relation between the *Logic* and the history of philosophy that it becomes possible, I hold, to estimate the immense achievement of this text.

## 2. Reason and the Understanding

Whereas Hegel's *Differenzschrift* is largely devoted to Schelling and Fichte, it contains valuable reflections on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Right at the beginning Hegel defines the task of philosophy by distinguishing the genuine principle of Kant's philosophy – the identity of subject and object – from its defective mode of appearance. He considers this identity to be pre-eminently revealed in the deduction of the categories, for Kant conceived of the categories as products of thought that simultaneously constitute 'objective determinations' (D 10/80). In Hegel's view, however, Kant bridged the gap between subject and object merely in a relative way. Whereas Kant exposed the role of pure concepts in the constitution of empirical knowledge, he considered sense perception itself to be an 'absolute a posteriori realm' (10/81). Regarding the realms of thought and sense perception as absolutely heterogeneous, he raised 'non-identity... into an absolute principle' (10/81). According to Hegel, Kant rightly considered thought to depend on pure concepts

such as substance and causality to acquire knowledge of something, but he should not have denied thought the capacity to achieve knowledge independent of sense perception (104/164). It was crucial for Hegel that this opposition between a priori form and a posteriori content be overcome:

As culture developed, oppositions that used to have significance as spirit and matter, soul and body, faith and intellect, freedom and necessity, etc.,...took the shape of the opposition between reason and sensibility, intelligence and nature, and, with respect to the universal concept, between absolute subjectivity and absolute objectivity. The sole interest of reason consists in resolving such rigidified oppositions.<sup>6</sup>

From the *Differenzschrift* onward Hegel sought to overcome the opposition between subject and object by arguing that thought is not necessarily dependent on sense perception to acquire a determinate content. For whereas thought is, in most cases, unaware of the concepts on which it relies to achieve empirical knowledge, it can, in Hegel's view, also achieve true knowledge of these concepts themselves. By thus turning the essential determinations of thought itself into the sole object of thought, the opposition between subject and object is resolved in an absolute manner.<sup>7</sup> This is precisely what Hegel's later *Science of Logic* intends to achieve. This logic is in agreement with transcendental logic insofar as it investigates the pure concepts that allow thought to turn appearances into objects of knowledge. Contrary to Kant, however, Hegel regards the mode of thought that pertains to these pure concepts themselves as the highest possible mode of knowledge.

The only way for Kant to block the path of rational metaphysics consisted in separating reality insofar as it can be known from reality insofar as it can be thought. The *Critique of Pure Reason* forecloses the possibility of rational metaphysics basically by distinguishing between the understanding (*Verstand*) and reason (*Vernunft*). Kant conceived of the understanding as the capacity to determine something by means of judgments, judgments that ultimately rely on pure concepts. The natural sciences are grounded on this discursive mode of thought. Although the pure understanding is the source of pure concepts, Kant seems to assume that it can only exercise its activity with regard to contents not produced by itself. He conceives of pure reason, by contrast, as a faculty that is concerned with contents produced by itself, that is, the soul, the world as such, and God. Thus, pure reason is the source of speculative

thought proper. Whereas pure reason produces ideas in order to achieve insight into reality as it is in itself, it lacks the capacity, in Kant's view, to determine its proper ideas by means of pure concepts. Thus, Kant rigorously separated the capacity to speculate about the ultimate principles of reality from the capacity to determine a given content.

According to Kant, the rationalist metaphysics he attributed to Leibniz and his followers precisely failed to keep these two modes of thought apart. On his account, both understanding and reason tend to transcend their inherent limit. The understanding, not satisfied with determining the content of empirical representations, tends to penetrate the domain of speculative thought in order to determine the ideas of reason by means of pure concepts alone. Reason, on the other hand, tends to let itself be governed by the understanding in order to turn its ideas into objects of knowledge. This defective cooperation of understanding and reason gave rise to a mode of philosophy that comprehended its objects in terms of oppositions such as those between infinity and finitude, indivisibility and divisibility, freedom and necessity. As Kant showed in the doctrine of the antinomies, judgments that rely on such oppositions to determine the idea of the world cannot lay claim to objective validity.

Although Hegel appropriates Kant's distinction between understanding and reason, he radicalizes its significance in at least two respects. First, Hegel maintains that transcendental philosophy itself did not sufficiently free itself from the grip of the understanding. Insofar as Kant ultimately held fast to oppositions such as those between subject and object or form and content, he no less than former metaphysics failed to grasp their inner unity. In Hegel's view, philosophy should allow the understanding to bring about oppositions, but only to subordinate these oppositions to their unity. Second, Hegel endows pure reason with the capacity to acquire true knowledge, a capacity of which it was deprived by Kant (cf. 25/94). However, the kind of knowledge that can be achieved by philosophy does not consist in predicating one-sided concepts of the ideas of reason. It rather consists in comprehending the *unity* of contrary conceptual determinations:

[R]eason opposes the absolute fixation of the dichotomy brought about by the understanding; and it does so all the more when the absolute opposites themselves originate in reason.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, reason should be able to grasp the unity of conceptual determinations such as infinity and finitude precisely when they originate not

so much in sense perception as in reason itself. Reason, in other words, should disentangle itself from the understanding and subordinate the latter to its proper end. According to Hegel, however, reason must first have divided off its discursive moment from itself so as to allow this moment – the understanding – to hold sway over the objects of sense experience. In doing so, reason at once reduces itself to a finite faculty posited over against its opposite. This finite, abstract mode of reason is deprived of the capacity to determine its proper products.

Hegel clearly considered Kant to have interpreted the relation between reason and understanding in this manner. Only Hegel, however, took the complementary one-sidedness of reason and understanding to result from the act by means of which reason divides off and opposes its discursive moment. This dynamic perspective subsequently allowed him to argue that reason can and should subjugate the force of the understanding to its proper end.<sup>9</sup> By doing so, philosophy would be able not only to resolve oppositions such as those between subject and object, but also ‘to produce a totality of knowledge, a system of science’ (46/113). Around 1801, however, Hegel had not yet developed the means to elaborate such a system. To achieve this end, he first had to further disentangle the speculative principle of transcendental philosophy from the quasi-psychological strand of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

### 3. Transcendental Synthesis

In *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel turns to Kant’s conception of synthetic a priori judgments, that is, judgments that extend our knowledge without being dependent on experience. Such judgments generate the kind of knowledge which former metaphysics always purported to possess: judgments such as ‘every event has a cause’, ‘substance is that which subsists over time’, or ‘the soul is indivisible’, are a priori as well as synthetic. Kant’s first *Critique* demonstrates why such judgments are valid only insofar as they function as constitutive principles of empirical knowledge. While we must assume that all events have a cause, for instance, we cannot determine the soul as an indivisible substance, nor the world as something that has a beginning in time. Thus, affirming that all knowledge necessarily relies on synthetic a priori principles, Kant denied thought the capacity to achieve knowledge by means of such principles alone.

Although Hegel considers Kant’s question as to the possibility of these judgments to express the idea of true rationality (FK 304/69), he holds that Kant conceived of it

with far too little definiteness and universality.... [H]e did not move beyond the subjective and external meaning of this question and believed he had established that rational cognition is impossible. (304/69)

Hegel criticizes Kant for conceiving of this transcendental synthesis 'only as a product and in its appearance as judgment' rather than as the essence of reason itself (317/81). Kant assigned the capacity to produce pure syntheses only to the understanding, that is, to the mode of thought that determines its objects by means of judgments. By denying this capacity to reason itself, Kant allegedly reduced reason to a formal identity posited over against the empirical manifold (317/80). Thus, while Kant on the one hand raised reason above the *relative* syntheses brought about by the understanding, he on the other hand denied reason the capacity to achieve the *absolute* synthesis of subject and object, that is, to produce contents without being dependent on intuition. According to Kant, Hegel writes, theoretical reason

makes no claim to autonomous dignity, nor does it claim to beget the son out of itself. It should be left to its own emptiness and to the unworthiness stemming from its... lack of need for... immanent knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

Hegel took this immanent knowledge to consist in 'a system of science', that is, in a philosophical comprehension of the pure concepts constitutive of scientific and philosophical knowledge itself (D 46/113). Yet in order to establish this system, he had a few more steps to take. First, he would have to extract the idea of transcendental synthesis from Kant's limited understanding of this synthesis in terms of judgments (FK 317/81). Second, he would have to trace back the syntheses articulated in synthetic a priori judgments not just to the activity exerted by reason, but rather to the non-subjective principle of self-determination that he would come to call 'the concept'.<sup>11</sup> This should allow him, third, to conceive of determinate pure concepts as particular guises of this principle, that is, as particular attempts at achieving the synthesis of their contrary determinations. Only then might he succeed in overcoming the one-sided positions of both former metaphysics and transcendental logic. The *Science of Logic*, to which I now turn, results from these decisive steps.



#### 4. Hegel, Kant, and General Metaphysics

The *Science of Logic*, first published in 1812, consists of a *Doctrine of Being*, a *Doctrine of Essence*, and a *Doctrine of the Concept*. Whereas the first two parts make up the objective logic, the third part is called the subjective logic. Hegel considered his objective logic to replace both Kant's transcendental logic and former metaphysics, in particular the part of metaphysics 'which was supposed to investigate the nature of *ens* in general, *ens* comprising both being and essence'.<sup>12</sup> This part of metaphysics used to be called general metaphysics or ontology. In this section I hope to clarify the way in which the *Logic* can indeed be said to replace both Kant's transcendental logic and former general metaphysics.

Hegel remarks in the preface to the first edition that his logical science constitutes metaphysics proper or purely speculative philosophy.<sup>13</sup> What he means by this, however, is actually very much akin to Kant's transcendental logic. This logic is divided into a transcendental analytic and a transcendental dialectic, a division that corresponds to that between general and special metaphysics. Wolff conceived of general metaphysics as a systematic account of the concepts and principles that allow thought to determine beings – whatever they are – as existing, as different from something else, as possible, as substances, as cause, as ground, etcetera. This part of metaphysics abstracted from the difference between empirical things such as billiard balls and things such as the soul, the world as such, or God. Special metaphysics, conversely, employed the concepts treated in general metaphysics to achieve knowledge of this latter kind of things, that is, of what Kant called ideas of reason. Although Kant's transcendental analytic limits the justified employment of pure concepts to the realm of appearances, he considered this part of his logic to replace former ontology or general metaphysics.<sup>14</sup>

Kant conceived of these concepts as the basis of synthetic a priori judgments. By distinguishing, for example, between one and many, substance and property, or cause and effect, these judgments determine the ways in which the content of given representations can be objectified at all. Since synthetic a priori judgments allow thought to constitute something as an object in the first place, I propose to consider them as particular ontological perspectives. The term 'ontological perspective' may seem to contradict itself. In Kant's view, ontology purported to achieve knowledge of reality by means of pure concepts alone, while the term 'perspective' rather suggests the necessarily finite reach of these concepts. I would contend, however, that Kant's critique of

former ontology by no means implies that he abandoned the investigation of those concepts that determine the ways in which something can become an object at all.<sup>15</sup> I will use the term 'ontology' to refer to the mode of philosophy that is concerned with such concepts. On this account, former general metaphysics, Kant's transcendental analytic, and Hegel's objective logic constitute three different modes of ontology.<sup>16</sup> Each in its own way investigates the ontological perspectives that ground our actual knowledge of objects, regardless of whether they are used to determine empirical representations, ideas of reason, or reality as such.

Hegel clearly endorses Kant's view that transcendental logic 'treats of the concepts which refer a priori to objects, and consequently does not abstract from the whole content of objective knowledge'.<sup>17</sup> Indiscriminately referring to these concepts as pure essentialities, pure thoughts, categories, and determinations of thought,<sup>18</sup> Hegel considered his logical science to replace Kant's transcendental investigation. He distinguishes his own position from the one he attributes to Kant, however, by maintaining that a concept such as causality possesses a content that differs in kind from that of empirical concepts.<sup>19</sup> Kant, for his part, had good reasons to stress that pure concepts are empty unless wedded to time qua pure intuition. For only thus could he dismiss the efforts of Leibniz and Wolff to comprehend reality as it is in itself by means of concepts alone.<sup>20</sup> Hegel does not seem to be interested in this aspect of Kant's critique of metaphysics. Contrary to Kant, he defends the possibility of purely rational knowledge. This is not to say, however, that Hegel thought this knowledge should be achieved in the manner of former special metaphysics, that is, by predicating pure concepts of the soul, the world as such, and God. This brings us to the question as to how Hegel saw the relation between his objective logic, Kant's transcendental dialectic, and special metaphysics.

## 5. Hegel, Kant, and Special Metaphysics

Kant maintained in the first *Critique* that the concepts which allow thought to acquire knowledge of objects cannot be used to achieve knowledge of reality as it is in itself, that is, of the soul, the world as such, and God. His transcendental dialectic shows what goes wrong when reason *does* attempt to determine ideas by means of pure concepts. This dialectic can be considered to replace former special metaphysics, which consisted in a rational psychology, cosmology, and theology. Hegel, for his part, notes that his objective logic replaces not just general

metaphysics, but also special metaphysics, that is, the discipline which 'attempted to comprehend by means of the forms of pure thought particular substrata taken primarily from the realm of representation, namely the soul, the world, and God'.<sup>21</sup> He does not indicate, however, how he considers his replacement of special metaphysics to differ from the replacement achieved by Kant's transcendental dialectic. In order to answer this question I first return to Kant.

Kant's transcendental dialectic demonstrates, to put it briefly, that metaphysics leads nowhere as long as it uses concepts originating in thought to determine infinite substrates such as the world, the soul, and God, that is, ideas likewise originating in thought. His critique of metaphysics consists in limiting the domain within which pure concepts can be employed to that of appearances. Contrary to Kant, however, Hegel seems to have no particular interest in the question of whether pure concepts are used to determine finite or infinite substrates. What matters to him is solely the nature of these concepts themselves:

Logic, however, considers these forms free from those substrata, from the subjects of representation; it considers them, their nature and worth, as they are in and for themselves. (L I, 61/64)

Hegel agrees with Kant that former metaphysics did not question the suitability of pure concepts to determine reality itself.<sup>22</sup> He holds, however, that Kant did not achieve the 'genuine critique' of this metaphysics because he conceived of these concepts merely as abstract a priori forms opposed to the realm of a posteriori contents (62/64). Although Kant distinguished the pure forms of thought from their possible applications, he was, in Hegel's view, unable to comprehend these forms as resulting from the movement in which pure thought determines *itself*:

The form, when thus thought out in its purity, will have within itself the capacity to *determine* itself, that is, to give itself a content, and that a *necessarily* explicated content – in the form of a system of determinations of thought. (61/63)

The forms of thought are to be considered in and for themselves; ... they examine themselves, they are to determine their own limit by themselves and lay bare their own defects. (Enc I, § 41, add. 1)

Since Hegel seems to disregard the question as to whether pure concepts are used to determine empirical representations or ideas of reason, he apparently abolishes the difference between general and specific metaphysics and, accordingly, that between Kant's transcendental analytic and dialectic. As I hope will become clear in the next sections, however, Hegel by no means fails to account for the difference between an empirical and a transcendent employment of pure concepts.

## 6. The Content of the *Logic*

It was crucial for Kant, as we have seen, to deny metaphysics the capacity to determine reality as it is itself. Whereas synthetic a priori judgments – based on pure concepts – bridge the gap between our experience of objects and the objects of experience, they do not narrow the gap between thought and things in themselves. In this regard, Hegel seems to oppose transcendental philosophy and to side with former metaphysics. This metaphysics believed, he notes, that 'thinking in its immanent determinations and the true nature of things are one and the same content.'<sup>23</sup> This also obtains of logical science itself:

[T]hese determinations are in fact the sole thing that matters; they are the true subject and content of reason, and anything else that one understands by subject matter and content in distinction from them has value only through them and in them.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, Hegel here emphasizes his affinity with former metaphysics and, accordingly, the gap between logical science and transcendental logic. Yet it seems to me that this gap is merely an apparent one. Hegel's *Logic* does not move beyond the world of appearances to determine reality as it is in itself by means of pure concepts, since its sole object consists in *the totality of these concepts themselves*. Hegel, in other words, does not maintain against Kant that the content of pure concepts suffices to achieve knowledge of reality considered as the totality of *beings*. He rather argues, first, that it is possible to achieve true knowledge of the way in which pure thought generates these contents and, second, that thought attains its ultimate end precisely by achieving knowledge of these immanent contents themselves. Since this mode of thought has thought itself as its sole content, it has completely resolved the opposition between subject and object.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, Hegel's view as to how the unity of thought and the object of thought can be achieved is much more in agreement with Kant's

conception of transcendental philosophy than his formulations suggest. No less than Kant, Hegel considers these pure concepts to determine the possible ways of objectifying empirical representations. He refers to the mode of thought that generates pure concepts as 'objective thinking', the 'objectifying activity', or 'thought as such'.<sup>26</sup> Occurring nowhere else than in human thought, pure concepts

are initially displayed and stored in human *language*. . . . [E]verything that [man] has transformed into language and expresses in it contains a category – concealed, mixed with other forms or clearly determined as such.<sup>27</sup>

When I determine something as the effect of something else, I am generally not aware of the concept of causality on which my judgment relies. That is why the activity exerted by thought as such, Hegel notes,

should no longer be called consciousness; consciousness embraces within itself the opposition of the ego and its object, an opposition which is not present in that original act.<sup>28</sup>

The activity of thought which is at work in all our ideas, purposes, interests and actions . . . occurs unconsciously. . . . To let thought become conscious of the *logical* nature which animates spirit, this is the task.<sup>29</sup>

This 'instinctive thought', Hegel writes in the *Encyclopedia*, constitutes a metaphysics 'the absolute power' of which 'we can only master by turning this power itself into the object of our knowledge'.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, he conceives of the *Logic* as a 'reconstruction' of the concepts that implicitly shape our thoughts as well as the concepts explicitly reflected upon by philosophy (L I, 30/39–40). Thus, the sole content of logical science consists in concepts such as being, becoming, infinity, force, substance, causality, ground, life, and teleology:

This objective thinking, then, is the content of pure science. Far from being formal, therefore, far from lacking the matter required for an actual and true cognition, pure science alone possesses a content that has absolute truth. (43–44/49–50)

Clearly, Hegel attributes the original production of pure concepts not to his logical science, but to pure thought such as it has evolved in the history initiated by Parmenides. Hegel could not have achieved the systematic reconstruction of these concepts, I hold, without presupposing this history. Yet this 'presupposition' by no means infringes upon the method which the *Logic* employs to comprehend these concepts as an organized whole – just as little as the stones required to build a house infringe upon its design.<sup>31</sup> Hegel's deduction of the pure concepts is immanent insofar as it proceeds independently of external considerations, but this immanence does not amount to absolute independence.

As I see it, the pure concepts treated in the *Logic* yield ontological perspectives that together determine the ways in which something can be objectified. According to Hegel, only the products of this objectification are worthy of the name 'actuality'.<sup>32</sup> By claiming that pure concepts expose that which 'the thing-in-itself is in truth, what truly is in itself' (130/121), Hegel does not relapse into a pre-critical position. The true nature of a billiard ball, in his view, is none other than its capacity of being determined as existing, as cause or effect, as substance, or as smaller than another billiard ball. Thus, when Hegel uses such terms as thing-in-itself in an affirmative way he does not refer to the abstract substrate of sense impressions or to equally abstract ideas of reason. He rather refers, I hold, to the movement in which pure, objectifying thought produces 'the connected whole of its determinations' (130/121).

On Hegel's reading, Kant merely traced back these determinations to their purported origin in the understanding (60/63), thus creating an opposition between that which can be known and that which can merely be thought. This opposition disappears, however, if philosophy abandons its efforts to achieve knowledge of the soul, the world as such, and God and, instead, adopts the pure concepts themselves – or determinations of thought – as its sole content:

Although critical philosophy had already turned metaphysics into logic, it, for fear of the object...attached an essentially subjective meaning to the logical determinations; this caused these determinations to remain under the spell of the object they avoided, and they were left with a thing-in-itself...as something beyond their reach. But the liberation from the opposition of consciousness...demands that the [determinations of thought] be considered...as that which is logical and the product of pure reason. (45/51)

## 7. From the Ego to the Concept

Although the *Critique of Pure Reason* merely traces back the pure concepts to the synthetic activity of the understanding, Hegel affirmed that Kant thus paved the way for a genuine deduction of these concepts (cf. Enc I, § 33). Such a deduction should take its bearings from a principle that precedes the opposition between subject and object commonly attributed to Kant. Philosophy, that is, should adopt the principle of any synthetic unity – which Hegel calls the concept – as its ultimate principle:

While Kant has made the profound observation that there are *synthetic* a priori principles and has recognized their root in the unity of self-consciousness and therefore in the identity of the concept with itself, he adopted the *specific* connection, the concepts of relation and the synthetic principles themselves *from formal logic as given*; their deduction should have been the exposition of the transition of that simple unity of self-consciousness into these its determinations and distinctions; but Kant spared himself the trouble of demonstrating this genuinely synthetic progress – the self-producing concept.<sup>33</sup>

According to Kant, synthetic a priori judgments articulate the perspectives that allow us to achieve knowledge of something in the first place. Unlike Kant, Hegel argues that pure concepts can only yield synthetic a priori judgments *if they are already synthetic in themselves*. In his view, a pure concept such as substance consists precisely in the synthesis of its contrary determinations, that is, in the unity of ‘substance’ and ‘property’. To be more precise, the concept of substance is nothing but the activity that consists in opposing and uniting its contrary determinations. Since pure concepts such as substance precede experience, they might be regarded as synthetic a priori concepts (although Hegel does not use this term).

In order to reconstruct the totality of these concepts, Hegel, first, traces them back to what he sees as the subjective principle of any synthetic activity, that is, to pure reason. This line of thought is already developed in *Faith and Knowledge*. The second step he takes consists in extracting the principle that produces synthetic concepts from its merely subjective guise, that is, from reason considered as a human faculty. This transition from reason to the concept occurs only in the *Science of Logic* itself. Hegel here conceives of reason as the way in which the concept unfolds in the element of finite subjectivity. He recognizes,

however, that the absolute nature of this principle could not have been grasped without Kant's resorting to the subject:

But in order for philosophy to make any real progress, it was necessary that the interest of thinking should be drawn to a consideration of the ego, of consciousness as such . . . , so that in this way the cognition of the *infinite form*, that is, of the concept, would be introduced. But in order that this cognition may be reached, that form has still to be relieved of the finite determinateness in which it is ego, or consciousness. The form, when thus thought out in its purity, will have within itself the capacity to *determine* itself, that is, to give itself a content, and that a *necessarily* explicated content – in the form of a system of determinations of thought.<sup>34</sup>

According to Hegel, something, whatever it is, determines itself by establishing and resolving the opposition between its contrary moments. Thus, self-consciousness divides itself into a purely formal ego and an empirical consciousness so as to establish itself as the synthesis of both contrary moments (cf. Enc III, § 423). The same activity of self-determination can be recognized, for instance in the way plants and animals attempt to actualize their inner nature. Terms such as 'the pure concept' or 'the concept' exclusively refer, in my view, to the effort of something to determine itself by establishing the synthesis of its contrary determinations. Evidently, the sphere of human history foremost testifies to this activity.

The *Logic*, for its part, is concerned not with the concept such as it manifests itself in the finite realms of nature or spirit, but exclusively with its unfolding in the element of pure thought, that is, the element constitutive of science and philosophy. Within this element, the concept constitutes 'the foundation of the specific concepts' that allow thought to establish something as an object of knowledge in the first place.<sup>35</sup> The task of philosophy, Hegel notes, consists in exhibiting the efforts at self-determination wherever they occur:

[T]he profounder basis is the soul itself, the pure concept which is the very heart of things, their simple life-pulse, even of the subjective thinking of them. To let thought become conscious of the *logical* nature which animates spirit, this is the task.<sup>36</sup>

This passage suggests that the *Logic* treats concepts as if they were living beings. In my view, Hegel's speculative science indeed requires that



every given content be treated as a process impelled by the attempt at determining itself from within. Thus, Hegel considers every possible content of speculative science – whether a concept, a living being, or a mode of thought – as driven by the urge to resolve the tension between that which it is in itself and its actual determination. Since he conceives this urge as independent of the elements in which it occurs, he can regard it as the ‘simple life-pulse’ of pure thought as well.<sup>37</sup> Just as we can regard animals as driven by the urge to satisfy their hunger, the *Logic* regards a pure concept as driven by the urge to establish the synthesis of its contrary determinations.

The *Logic* deploys this pulse – that is, absolute negativity – to reconstruct the totality of the concepts generated in the actual history of thought. Hegel regards this reconstruction as a ‘genuinely synthetic progress’ (L II, 505/789) because it impels every concept to establish the synthesis of its contrary determinations. Thus, just as the *Phenomenology of Spirit* lets human consciousness achieve insight into its essential determinations, the *Logic* lets philosophy achieve insight into the totality of pure concepts generated – behind its back – by pure thought as such.<sup>38</sup> For Hegel, philosophy can only achieve this insight by disentangling the truly ontological thrust of Kant’s transcendental analytic from its concern with the subjective faculties of knowledge, and by disentangling the speculative thrust of Kant’s transcendental dialectic from its concern with metaphysical ideas.

## 8. Synthetic Concepts as Definitions of the Absolute

As we have seen, Hegel considers his objective logic to replace former metaphysics as well as Kant’s transcendental logic (cf. L I, 61/63). Yet since he seems to disregard the question of whether pure concepts are predicated of appearances or ideas of reason, the classical distinction between general and special metaphysics seems to be irrelevant to the *Logic*. It is clear, at least, that this distinction does not correspond to the *Doctrine of Being* and the *Doctrine of Essence*. I hold, however, that the *Logic* does not abandon this distinction, but rather enfoldes general and special metaphysics into each other. On the one hand, pure concepts can be employed to achieve knowledge of appearances. This primary function of concepts used to be treated within general metaphysics. On the other hand, special metaphysics used these very concepts to achieve purely rational knowledge of the soul, the world as such, and God. Precisely by considering each pure concept in light of these two functions

at once, Hegel, I will argue, could conceive of each concept as the effort to establish the unity of its contrary determinations.

In order to explain this I will begin by reconsidering Hegel's transformation of special metaphysics. According to a remark in the *Encyclopedia*, special metaphysics purported to determine the soul by predicating unity, indivisibility, and permanence of it. Kant, by contrast, held that the soul does not permit of predication at all. Hegel agrees with Kant that the task of philosophy does not consist in predicating one-sided concepts of substrates such as the soul. Its task rather consists, Hegel contends, in comprehending

the totality of those determinations... which dogmatism takes to be permanent and true only insofar as they are separated from each other... The soul is neither finite only, nor infinite only; it is really the one just as much as the other, and in that way neither the one nor the other. In other words, such isolated determinations are invalid, and they hold true only as sublated. (Enc I, § 32, add.)

Seen from Hegel's perspective, the soul is not opposed to the body, but distinguishes itself from its corporeal externality in order to actualize itself in the latter. Accordingly, it does not constitute the substrate of abstract conceptual determinations, but exclusively consists in the attempt to achieve the synthesis of the inner and the outer.<sup>39</sup> Hegel therefore considers the soul to be an inadequate representation of the concept – qua principle of self-determination – such as it enacts itself in the element of subjective spirit. Seen from this vantage point, conceptual determinations such as the infinite and the finite no longer emerge as mutually exclusive either. According to Hegel, they rather constitute a synthetic unity which, as such, is nothing but a particular determination of the concept such as it enacts itself in the realm of pure thought.

Now Hegel notes repeatedly in both the *Logic* and the *Encyclopedia* that concepts which constitute the synthesis of contrary determinations might be regarded as definitions of the absolute. Drawing on the language of former metaphysics, he remarks at the beginning of the *Doctrine of Being* that

the concept of the unity of being and non-being – or, in a more reflected form, the unity of difference and non-difference... could be regarded as the first, purest, that is most abstract definition of the absolute – as it would in fact be the case if we were at all concerned

with the form of definitions and with the name of the absolute. In this sense, that abstract concept would be the first definition of this absolute and all further determinations and developments only more specific and richer definitions of it.<sup>40</sup>

Representing the absolute in terms of the soul, the world as such, and God, special metaphysics predicated pure concepts of these representations in order to achieve purely rational knowledge of them. For Hegel, by contrast, the concept of God refers exclusively to the principle of pure thought that generates the concepts constitutive of our knowledge and of reality insofar as it can be known, that is, to the concept as such. Neither does Hegel consider the determinations of the pure concept as real definitions, for definitions couple a single predicate – rather than a unity of contrary determinations – to a subject (cf. Enc I, § 85). Taking all this into account, Hegel suggests that pure concepts, conceived as the synthesis of their contrary determinations, constitute specific ‘definitions’ of the absolute principle of reality usually represented as God. It can be argued, therefore, that the *Logic* replaces former special metaphysics by attributing determinate pure concepts – conceived as synthetic unity – no longer to substrates derived from the sphere of representation, but to the concept as such.

As we have seen, however, the *Logic* is also concerned with the role of pure concepts in the production of empirical knowledge. In this respect, it corresponds to both former general metaphysics and Kant’s transcendental analytic. As I suggested above, Hegel’s objective logic enfolds the realms of general and special metaphysics into one another. Since Kant’s transcendental analytic and dialectic correspond to these disciplines, the same holds for these two parts of transcendental logic.

The twofold function of the pure concept ‘being’ can be used to clarify this point. Before I can determine something as cold or warm, as bigger or smaller than something else, as possible or necessary, or as cause, I must already have determined it as something that is. The concept of being, that is, yields one of the ontological perspectives that allow thought to determine something as an object at all.<sup>41</sup> In this respect, it belongs to the realm of general metaphysics.

Yet insofar as ‘being’ constitutes at once a determination of pure thought – formerly represented as God – it simultaneously belongs to the realm of special metaphysics. Former metaphysics predicated ‘being’ indiscriminately of both created things and of God. Hegel’s transformation of former metaphysics results in the view that the concept of being, first, allows thought to determine something as an object of experience

and, second, constitutes a particular determination of the concept as such. Whereas the first element of this transformation is in accordance with Kant's transcendental analytic, its second element moves beyond the negative result of Kant's transcendental dialectic.

It emerges immediately, however, that the concept of being constitutes a highly inadequate determination of both the objects of experience and the pure concept itself: it does not even allow me to distinguish between one thing and another. I would not be able to determine water in terms of cold or warm, had I not implicitly determined it as the unity of what it actually is (cold) and what it is not, but could possibly become (not cold). This is to say that I can only determine something as either the one or the other if I from the outset order my sense perceptions in view of *both* contrary conceptual determinations. This obtains not only of empirical determinations such as cold and not-cold, but also of the ontological determinations on which they rely.

On this view, the true content of the most simple ontological perspective does not consist in 'being' alone, but rather in the synthetic unity of 'being' and 'non-being'.<sup>42</sup> Insofar as objectifying thought determines the concept as such as the synthetic unity of 'being' and 'non-being', it gives rise to an ontological perspective that subsequently enables the determination of an object as, for example, either cold or not cold. Yet the content of this ontological perspective itself does not consist in either 'being' or 'non-being', but *in the synthetic unity of these contrary determinations*. This unity determines both the pure concept itself and opens thought onto the realm of possible objects.<sup>43</sup> In the following section I hope to show that Hegel considers this latter possibility to originate in the movement whereby a concept lets its contrary determinations gain independence.

## 9. The Role of Synthetic Concepts in Finite Knowledge

In the *Logic* that forms the first part of the *Encyclopedia* Hegel again proposes that pure concepts be conceived as definitions of the absolute. He now specifies this idea as follows:

Being itself...as well as the logical determinations in general may be conceived as definitions of the absolute, or as *metaphysical definitions of God*; but to be more precise, [one should] always [consider them to be] only the first, simple determination of a sphere and then also the third, which is the return out of the difference into the simple self-relation....The second determinations, which constitute a

sphere in its being-different, are, on the other hand, definitions of the finite.<sup>44</sup>

In order to understand this obscure, yet pivotal passage we have to bear in mind that Hegel considers pure concepts to consist in the unity of contrary determinations such as infinity and finitude, identity and difference, indivisibility and divisibility, cause and effect. Each of these synthetic concepts yields a particular ontological perspective. What Hegel here calls 'sphere' is, in my view, none other than such a perspective.

But what could Hegel possibly mean by the three subsequent determinations of such a sphere? To suggest a possible answer I will consider once again the role of the understanding. I argued above that the understanding, on Hegel's account, objectifies the content of given representations by determining something as either cold or not cold, divisible or indivisible, cause or effect, substance or property, means or end. In short, its activity consists in predicating one out of two contrary determinations of something.<sup>45</sup> It might be inferred from this that a particular ontological perspective can only be used to determine appearances if the contrary determinations of a synthetic concept *have somehow disentangled themselves* from each other so as to establish themselves as independent concepts. I consider Hegel's oblique reference to 'a sphere in its being-different' to denote a pure concept which has opposed its contrary determinations so as to enable thought to predicate either of them of appearances.

The concept of causality can be used as an example to clarify this. According to Hegel, this concept constitutes, first, the synthetic unity of cause and effect. In this respect, it can be taken to constitute a specific definition of the concept as such. Special metaphysics implicitly relied on this synthetic unity to define God as a cause not caused by something else, that is, as a being capable of absolute self-determination. The concept of causality also allows thought, second, to determine empirical objects as *either cause or effect*.<sup>46</sup> This requires that the contrary conceptual determinations enfolded in the concept of causality become opposed to one another. Cause and effect are thus transformed into finite, one-sided conceptual determinations that allow thought to acquire knowledge of finite objects. This is the mode of causality we tend to identify with causality as such.

Because the *Logic* hardly ever addresses the question as to the application of pure concepts, it is difficult to see that Hegel considers each pure concept in a twofold way. Insofar as each pure concept consists – be it

implicitly or explicitly – in the synthesis of its contrary determinations, he considers it to constitute a particular guise of the concept as such. Insofar as it disentangles and opposes these contrary determinations, on the other hand, he considers it to constitute the a priori source of empirical knowledge.

However, as we have seen, the understanding tends to transcend the domain of appearances in order to determine reality as it is in itself. Thus penetrating the domain of reason, the understanding produces the same conceptual oppositions as before. Yet oppositions such as those between the infinite and the finite by no means allow metaphysics to achieve knowledge of reality as it is in itself. For, as Kant had shown in his doctrine of the antinomies, it is impossible to acquire knowledge of the world as such by predicating one-sided concepts such as being, cause, or indivisibility of it (Enc I, § 28). Drawing on an insight intimated by Kant, Hegel seems to assume that former metaphysics relied on particular pure concepts such as infinity or causality insofar as they had opposed their contrary determinations, that is, insofar as they were merely *suitable to ground empirical knowledge*.<sup>47</sup>

Kant inferred from this that pure concepts can only be employed with regard to the a posteriori realm of appearances. Hegel, conversely, argues that contrary determinations which have isolated themselves from their synthetic unity *constitute just one determination of a specific ontological perspective and, hence, should not be mistaken for that perspective as such*. Kant was no more aware than former metaphysics of the movement in which a pure concept opposes its contrary determinations so as to establish their synthetic unity. According to Hegel, it is precisely this synthesis of contrary determinations – that is, an ontological perspective according to its first and third moment – that might allow philosophy to achieve the purely rational knowledge which Kant allegedly had denied metaphysics.

According to Hegel, in sum, a pure concept such as causality consists in the synthesis of its contrary determinations. Insofar as the understanding turns this unity into the opposition of cause and effect, it enables thought to achieve knowledge of appearances such as colliding billiard balls. This opposition at the same time prevents philosophy from comprehending its objects, whatever they are, as attempts at self-determination or self-actualization. However, Hegel considers the activity which the understanding exerts in the realm of philosophy not merely in terms of this negative result. For only when philosophy is confronted with the oppositions produced by the understanding can it possibly undertake to establish their synthetic unity explicitly. Only

in the *Logic* itself does a concept such as causality get the chance, as it were, to actualize the synthesis of its contrary determinations. The result of this movement – the unity of cause and effect – is what Hegel in the *Encyclopedia* calls the third determination of a particular sphere.

This determination pertains as much to the absolute principle of thought as the first. Only now does it turn out, however, that even the concept of causality *considered in and for itself* fails to determine this principle adequately. For the determination of the concept as such *in terms of* cause and effect does not adequately manifest its true nature. The concept of causality – just as, for that matter, all other finite pure concepts – is only suitable to be employed with regard to the realm of appearances.<sup>48</sup> This truth, already discovered by Kant, emerges precisely by considering what goes wrong when the understanding attempts to determine reality as it is in itself by means of one-sided conceptual determinations. That is why each of the pure concepts treated in the *Logic*, as we will see in the next chapter, must necessarily give way to a concept that has resolved the purported independence of its contrary determinations to a greater extent.

## 10. The Principle of Speculative Science

Hegel, as we have seen, endorses Kant's view that pure reason produces antinomies if it lets itself be governed by the understanding. He notes already in his *Differenzschrift* that the antinomy is 'the contradiction that resolves itself, the highest formal expression of knowledge and truth' (D 39/108). Kant merits great praise, Hegel notes at the end of the *Logic*, for his

impetus to the restoration of logic and dialectic in the sense of the examination of the determinations of thought in and for themselves....[T]hese determinations are in fact the sole thing that matters; they are the true subject and content of reason, and anything else that one understands by subject matter and content in distinction from them has value only through them and in them.<sup>49</sup>

Instead of predicating conceptual determinations of a 'fixed subject of representation', one should conceive of such a subject as a concept that must 'in and for itself submit to the dialectic' (L II, 560/833). According to Hegel, as I have argued, every particular pure concept constitutes a particular determination of the concept, that is, of the principle of

self-determination constitutive of thought as such. Every particular pure concept is at odds with the concept as such insofar as it has not achieved the unity of its contrary determinations in an absolute way. That is why it is impelled – within the *Logic* – to give up the purported independence of its contrary moments:

Thus all the oppositions that are assumed as fixed, as for example finite and infinite, individual and universal, ... are in and for themselves a transition; the synthesis and the subject in which they appear is the product of their concept's own reflection. If a consideration that ignores the concept stops short at their external relation, isolates them and leaves them as fixed presuppositions, it is the concept, on the contrary, that keeps them steadily in view, moves them as their soul and brings out their dialectic. (560/833)

Conceptual oppositions such as those between infinity and finitude are actually brought about during the history of thought. Only the *Logic* comprehends these oppositions as resulting from their initial unity. Since this comprehension reveals at once the untenability of such oppositions, it impels the contrary determinations of a pure concept to establish their synthesis.<sup>50</sup> Even though Kant did not take this step himself, his doctrine of the antinomies made it possible for Hegel to resolve the conceptual oppositions he attributed to former metaphysics and transcendental philosophy alike. This is, in fact, the task achieved in the *Logic* itself.

Now it might seem that a concept which has achieved the unity of its contrary moments fulfills all the requirements for adequately determining things in themselves such as the soul, the world as such, and God. For in this case metaphysics can no longer be said to predicate single, one-sided concepts of ideas of reason. As we have seen, however, the *Logic* equally dissolves the infinite substrates of the ideas of reason. According to Hegel, the ideas of the soul, the world as such, and God, refer exclusively to the concept such as it manifests itself in the realms of finite spirit, spatio-temporal externality, and pure thought. Thus, by developing an ontological perspective constituted by the synthesis of contrary determinations, philosophy might seem to have become capable of satisfying its ineradicable desire for knowledge of reality as it is in itself. Yet at the very moment philosophy struggles out of the grasp of the understanding, *there is nothing left to assign predicates to except the concept itself*. The concept, Hegel notes,



is the ground and the totality of the preceding determinations, of the categories of being and of the determinations of reflection. (L II, 295/617)

Nothing remains of reality insofar as it can be thought but the concept as such. The concept as such, in its turn, is nothing but the principle of the objectifying activity that produces the pure concepts constitutive of both knowledge and the objects of knowledge. I have argued that these concepts constitute the exclusive content of the *Logic*. As Hegel points out in the final section of the *Logic*, this work achieves 'the pure conformity of the concept and its reality', because the reality of the concept consists precisely in the totality of pure concepts generated by pure thought.<sup>51</sup> Depriving its object of all substantiality, the *Logic* thus achieves the purely rational knowledge which Kant seemed to have considered impossible, without for that matter relapsing back into dogmatic metaphysics:

The solid ground which argumentation has in the unchanging subject is therefore shaken, and only this movement itself becomes the object. (Phen 45/37)

Although Hegel does not accept Kant's critique of metaphysics in all respects, he implicitly endorses Kant's conception of philosophy as an ongoing struggle between the understanding and reason. Extracting these complementary modes of thought from their subjective guise, Hegel reinterprets them as the twofold activity that consists in producing and annulling conceptual oppositions.

The *Logic* stages the struggle between these complementary activities in such a way that there can be no doubt as to its outcome, for its ultimate result consists in the ontological perspective constitutive of speculative science itself. Only this perspective, to which Hegel refers as the absolute idea, allows philosophy to comprehend something in terms of its effort to achieve the synthesis of its contrary determinations. This perspective enables philosophy not only to resolve conceptual oppositions such as those between subject and object, essence and appearance, infinity and finitude, freedom and necessity, but also to comprehend nature and spirit as aspiring to resolve the conflict between their contrary determinations.

As we have seen, Hegel already in the *Essay on Natural Law* conceives of absolute negativity as a force which operates not only in tragic

conflicts, but in everything that succeeds in resolving the opposition between its contrary moments. There is no doubt that Hegel's speculative science owes its immense force to the sway of this negativity. This does not entail, however, that its purported ubiquity cannot be challenged. In order to develop a 'genuine' critique of speculative science, I will first examine the different guises of negativity that determine the structure of the *Science of Logic*. This will also allow me to detail the interpretation of the *Logic* developed so far.

# 3

## Negativity

### 1. Introduction

The *Science of Logic*, I argued in the previous chapter, conceives of every pure concept as the unity of its contrary determinations. In line with Kant's doctrine of the antinomies, Hegel considers the opposition implied in each of these concepts only to emerge when they are used to determine reality as such. Contrary to Kant, however, Hegel conceives of this opposition as a necessary moment of the movement in which these concepts establish the synthesis of their contrary determinations. The *Doctrine of Being* regards concepts belonging to the sphere of being as 'imperfect guises of the negation in being' (L I, 174/157). I take this to mean that Hegel considers all pure concepts to incorporate their contrary determinations to some extent. Insofar as they succeed in doing this, they testify to the principle of absolute negativity which Hegel considers to enact itself in the realms of pure thought, nature and spirit alike.

In order to understand what Hegel means by absolute negativity it does not suffice, in my view, to consider his remarks on, for instance, the negation of the negation.<sup>1</sup> I consider it far more rewarding to investigate the different guises of absolute negativity at work in the *Logic*, as I propose to do in this chapter.<sup>2</sup> It will be argued, first, that the *Logic* determines the sequence of pure concepts by considering to what extent they have already incorporated their contrary determinations in the history of philosophy itself and, second, that this criterion also governs the division of the *Logic* into the *Doctrine of Being*, the *Doctrine of Essence*, and the *Doctrine of the Concept*. By arguing that Hegel in the *Logic* basically distinguishes between three modes of negativity, I hope to provide a perspective from which the general thrust of the *Logic* can be further

clarified. This can only be done by disentangling the many different layers of the *Logic* to a larger extent than Hegel has done himself.

## 2. The History of Pure Thought

Hegel notes in *Reason in History* that philosophy might be accused of construing world history on the basis of a priori thoughts rather than facts (RH 25/25). This criticism misses the mark, he holds, as long as philosophy proceeds from the one a priori thought that is not arbitrary, namely, the thought 'that reason governs the world and that, accordingly, the way of world history is a rational one' (28/27). If the history of philosophy constitutes the core of world history, as Hegel maintains elsewhere, then philosophy must above all be able to comprehend the rationality at work in its own history (LHP III, 456/547). In my view, the *Science of Logic* achieves precisely this self-comprehension of philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

As we have seen, the *Logic* reconstructs the totality of pure concepts underlying scientific and philosophical knowledge. According to Hegel, philosophy distinguishes itself from the sciences by investigating these concepts themselves.<sup>4</sup> Since both the history of philosophy and the *Science of Logic* acquire their content independently of sense perception, Hegel considers both modes of thought to unfold the determinations of the concept in the element of pure thought. Hegel, as I argued in the previous chapter, considers every philosophical system to rely on a specific definition of the principle of reality as such, that is, of the concept.<sup>5</sup> Since subsequent philosophical systems expose the one-sidedness of the then current definition by replacing it with a richer definition, the historical sequence of these definitions can be considered to exhibit a certain necessity. This necessity constitutes the sole principle of the *Logic*:

The same development of thought which is exposed in the history of philosophy is exposed in philosophy itself, but in the latter this development is liberated from historical externality and occurs purely in the element of thought.<sup>6</sup>

Since the history of philosophy is actually part of world history, it occurs at once in the element of pure thought and in the element of temporal externality. The *Logic*, on the other hand, largely abstracts from the way in which particular philosophers employed concepts such as being, substance, or ground to determine the principle of reality as such.

This abstraction allows Hegel to comprehend every pure concept as a particular determination of the concept and, moreover, to attribute the production of pure concepts not just to philosophers, but to the concept such as it unfolds its immanent determinations in the realm of pure thought. In Hegel's view, both the *Logic* and the history of philosophy expose these determinations.

The difference between these two levels can best be clarified, I hold, by considering Hegel's remarks on the beginning of the history of thought. According to Hegel, the element of externality initially did not interfere with the logical development of the concept. He maintains therefore that the beginning of the history of thought and of the *Logic* are the same.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Hegel regards Parmenides as the first philosopher to have isolated pure thought from its initial immersion in sensible representations. By elevating thought 'to pure thought, to being as such' Parmenides created the very element of science.<sup>8</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, Hegel conceives of the concept 'being' on the one hand as the most general condition of empirical knowledge and, on the other hand, as a first determination of the principle of reality as such. As he sees it, Parmenides gave birth to the history of pure thought by expressing this latter determination for the first time:

If 'being' is predicated of the absolute, then this results in its first definition: the absolute is being. This is (in thought) the most initial, abstract and stunted definition. It is the definition of the Eleatics, but at once the well-known one of God as the sum of all realities.<sup>9</sup>

The Eleatics, above all Parmenides, first enunciated the simple thought of *pure being* as the absolute and as the sole truth. ... Against that simple and one-sided abstraction the profound Heraclitus brought forward the higher, total concept of becoming and said: ... all is becoming. (L I, 84/83)

Since the determination of the principle of reality in terms of being precludes the comprehension of movement and change, the one-sidedness of this concept could not but emerge at some point. This actually occurred, in Hegel's view, when Heraclitus determined the principle of reality in terms of the concept 'becoming' (84/83). This event exemplifies, Hegel writes, 'the true refutation of one system by another, a refutation that consists in ... reducing the principle of the refuted philosophy to an ideal moment of a higher concrete form of the idea'.<sup>10</sup>

Although reductions of this kind are constitutive of philosophy and logical science alike, there is a fundamental difference between these two levels. For Parmenides himself could not grasp the one-sidedness of the concept 'being' that impelled it to turn into 'becoming'. Neither could Heraclitus grasp the one-sidedness of the concept 'becoming'. Only Hegel comprehends each pure concept as a particular determination of the concept as such, that is, as a finite result from its attempt to establish the synthetic unity of its contrary determinations. Seen from this perspective, Heraclitus emerges as the first philosopher to have conceived of the contrary of 'being', that is, of 'nothing', as immanent to being itself. It is a great insight, Hegel notes in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*,

to recognize that being and non-being are merely abstractions, devoid of truth, and that the first truth lies in becoming. ... According to Heraclitus, the moment of negativity is immanent; and that is what the concept of philosophy as such is concerned with. (LHP I, 325–26/283–84)

Whereas the actual beginning of the history of philosophy only testifies to the transition from the concept of being to that of becoming, the *Logic* comprehends this transition in light of the movement which reduces both 'being' and 'nothing' to moments of the concept of becoming:

It is the dialectical immanent nature of 'being' and 'nothing' themselves to manifest their unity, that is, 'becoming', as their truth.... They sink from their initially imagined *independence* to the status of *moments*, moments which are still *distinct* but at the same time are sublated.<sup>11</sup>

Embracing 'being' and 'nothing', the concept of becoming is the first concept to express the synthesis of its contrary determinations. Since it allows thought to comprehend movement, it is better suited than the preceding concepts to determine appearances as well as the principle of reality as such. According to Hegel, all subsequent determinations of the pure concept constitute nothing but modes of this primary synthetic unity:

Since the unity of 'being' and 'nothing' as the primary truth now forms once and for all the basis and element of all that follows,

besides 'becoming', all further logical determinations, such as 'determinate being', 'quality', and in general all philosophical concepts, are examples of this unity. (L I, 86/85)

Contrary to a mode of philosophy determined by the understanding, the *Logic* considers even 'being' and 'nothing' to contain their contrary determinations within themselves.<sup>12</sup> Because these concepts have in no way begun to *incorporate* their contrary determination, they appear to be completely opposed to one another. Seen from a speculative vantage point, however, everything is driven by the urge to resolve the contradiction between that which it is in itself and that which it has actually become.<sup>13</sup> Once Hegel has conceived of pure thought as animated by this 'simple life-pulse' as well (27/37), he merely has to observe how concepts such as being and nothing attempt to overcome the contradiction between that which they are in themselves (the synthetic unity of their contrary determinations) and what they actually have become in the history of philosophy (one-sided determinations purporting to be comprehensive).<sup>14</sup>

The *Logic* reveals that the concepts of being and nothing cannot achieve the synthesis of their contrary determinations without turning into another concept. The concept of becoming, for its part, will equally turn out to be incapable of adequately determining the principle of reality as such. This concept is equally impelled to oppose its contrary determinations and, hence, to give up its purported comprehensiveness. Since the concept of becoming has a richer content than the concept of being alone, the contrary moments implied in the concept of becoming – 'coming-to-be' and 'ceasing-to-be' – are also richer than the concepts of being and nothing. The actualization of the concept 'becoming' therefore results in concepts that again better manifest the synthetic structure of the concept as such.

Clearly, this movement could not have taken place without philosophers such as Parmenides and Heraclitus. The history of philosophy shows that the insight into the one-sidedness of a particular pure concept yields a less one-sided pure concept. In order to comprehend the development of pure thought as a *necessary* development, however, Hegel regards the reflection achieved by particular philosophers as the merely subjective side of the absolute reflection achieved by the concept as such. This concept constitutes the ultimate principle of the history of pure thought. Only in light of this principle can Hegel comprehend the determinate pure concepts as momentary results of a necessary process.

So far I have argued that the *Logic* distinguishes pure concepts by determining to what extent they have established the synthesis of their contrary determinations in the history of philosophy itself. Hegel explains the difference between these two levels of pure thought as follows:

[A]s the concept proceeds toward the exposition of itself, it is of capital importance always clearly to distinguish between that which is still *in itself* and that which has been *posited*, between the way in which these determinations are in the concept and the way in which they are as posited or being-for-other. This is a distinction which belongs only to the dialectical development and is unknown to metaphysical philosophy, which also includes critical philosophy; the definitions of metaphysics . . . seek to assert and produce only *that which is*, more specifically *that which is in itself*.<sup>15</sup>

The term 'being-for-other' here refers, in my view, to the way in which a concept has actually manifested itself in the history of philosophy. According to Hegel, this history has posited pure concepts either as more or less independent concepts or as part of conceptual oppositions.<sup>16</sup> The *Logic*, liberating the pure concepts from the clutch of the understanding, lets them achieve their synthetic unity, as it were, for the first time in their life. The example of Heraclitus' criticism of Parmenides has made it clear, however, that the negativity which impels concepts to establish the synthesis of their contrary determinations is already at work in the history of philosophy itself, albeit only behind its back. In what follows I hope to argue that the various forms of this negativity also define the relation between the three main parts of the *Logic*.

### 3. The *Doctrine of Being*

The *Logic*, I would contend, orders the totality of pure concepts by considering the extent to which they have already established the synthetic unity of their contrary determinations in the history of philosophy itself. By setting out from the concept that has not yet begun to achieve this unity at all, Hegel can let this concept overcome its one-sidedness from within and, hence, reconstruct the totality of pure concepts that have emerged in the history of pure thought. Those concepts that have hardly, if at all, established the unity of their contrary determinations



constitute the poorest determinations of the concept as such. These concepts fall within the *Doctrine of Being*:

In the sphere of being, the self-determination of the concept itself is at first merely in itself [*an sich*]; ... and the reflected determinations of being, such as something and other, or finite and infinite, although essentially referring to each other or existing as being-for-other, also count as ... existing independently [*für sich bestehend*]. (L I, 131/121–22)

The *Doctrine of Being* treats those concepts that enable thought to determine objects with regard to their qualities, quantitative relations and proper proportions. Hegel conceives of the general concept 'measure' as a concept that makes it possible to determine such quantitative determinations of an object as are essential to the object itself. Thus, the ontological perspective based on this concept resolves the one-sided perspectives based on the concepts 'quality' and 'quantity'.<sup>17</sup> All three perspectives allow thought to determine its object by means of single conceptual determinations rather than oppositions. Whereas these concepts are presupposed in any mode of empirical knowledge, they only have become objects of thought in the history of philosophy. Hegel therefore implicitly or explicitly draws on Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Kant, and others to comprehend these concepts. He moves beyond them, however, by regarding even these concepts as animated by the effort to bring about the unity of their contrary determinations. Concepts such as 'being', 'determinate being', and 'something', although referring to their counterparts, have always presented themselves as more or less isolated concepts. For that reason they are merely suited to determine finite objects.<sup>18</sup> Since a concept such as determinate being (*Dasein*) has not really incorporated its contrary, it constitutes

the sphere of difference, of dualism, the field of finitude. Determinateness is determinateness as such; it is a merely relative, not absolute way of being determined. ... [Q]uality, otherness, limit – like reality, being-in-itself, the ought, and so on – are the imperfect guises [*die unvollkommenen Einbildungen*] of the negation in being, guises still based on the difference between both. (174/157)

The general ontological perspective constituted by the concept of quality allows thought to determine something with regard to its color, its

relation to other things, etcetera. We would not be able to determine an object as, for instance, red or non-red, without relying on the concepts of being and nothing. It is by means of these most general concepts that we begin to determine something with regard to what it is in itself (the moment of identity) and with regard to what it is not (the moment of difference). As we have seen in the previous chapter, the understanding must abstract from the unity of these determinations to predicate one of them to appearances. Thus, empirical judgments that determine something as either red or non-red are ultimately based on the movement in which pure thought opposes 'nothing' to 'being', that is, completely abstracts from their synthetic unity.<sup>19</sup>

This abstraction is appropriate insofar as thought relies on pure concepts to determine appearances, but not insofar as it employs these concepts to determine the principle of reality, as philosophy has actually done with such concepts as being, infinity, or substance. This occurred for the first time, on Hegel's account, when Parmenides isolated 'being' from 'nothing' or 'the negative':

[T]he determination of the negative, of multiplicity, has been removed from the 'one', from 'being'. . . . The Eleatics . . . proceeded by positing that only the 'one' is and that the negative is not at all – a consequence which, although admirable, remains a huge abstraction. (LHP I, 300/246)

Yet the history of pure thought would not have ensued without this abstraction. The same holds for Hegel's reconstruction of the essential determinations of pure thought. That is why the beginning of the *Logic* deliberately repeats the very abstraction that Parmenides enacted unknowingly, as Hegel notes later on in the text:

In the pure reflection of the beginning as it is made in this logic with 'being' as such, the transition [from 'being' to 'nothing'] is still concealed; since 'being' is posited only as immediate, 'nothing' here breaks forth only immediately. . . . When 'being' is taken in this simplicity and immediacy, the recollection that it is the result of complete abstraction . . . is left behind in science.<sup>20</sup>

Now it seems to me that the *Logic* distinguishes implicitly between four modes of abstraction. First, empirical judgments abstract from the synthetic unity of, for instance, red and non-red in order to predicate one of these contrary determinations of appearances. This empirical mode

of abstraction presupposes, second, that pure thought has abstracted from the synthetic unity of the concept as such, thus yielding the seemingly independent concepts 'being' and 'nothing'. Third, the Eleatics adopted this ontological abstraction to determine the principle of reality as such in terms of being alone. Fourth, the *Logic* repeats this abstraction, but comprehends it as resulting from the movement in which the concept *itself* abstracts from its synthetic unity so as to constitute the ultimate condition of possibility of empirical knowledge and, at the same time, to unfold its immanent determinations in the history of thought.

Judgments based on abstract concepts such as being or nothing are incapable of articulating even a simple process like the becoming red of tomatoes. Since the concept of becoming has to some extent incorporated 'being' and 'nothing', it allows thought to determine something in terms of a process. This concept is, however, hardly more appropriate than 'being' to determine the principle of reality as such, as Hegel notes in the *Encyclopedia*:

Even 'becoming', however, remains in and for itself a highly poor determination which has to deepen and fulfill [the principle of philosophy] from within. (Enc I, § 88, add.)

The more a concept has incorporated its contrary determinations, the more it allows philosophy to comprehend its objects as attempts at establishing the unity of their contrary determinations, that is, as attempts at self-determination. The concepts treated in the *Doctrine of Being* merely allow thought to determine something in terms of quality, quantity, and proportion. Because these concepts fail to express the self-determining activity proper to the concept as such, they are suited merely to achieve knowledge of inorganic nature. Since Hegel considers these concepts as particular determinations of the ontological perspective constituted by the concept of being, the inadequacy of this concept in the realm of philosophy cannot but emerge at some point.

Although a philosopher such as Plato might be considered to have achieved this insight, the *Logic* does not follow the actual history of thought in this respect. Instead, it comprehends the logic of this history by first letting the concept of being unfold the totality of its immanent determinations. The *Logic* temporarily abstracts, that is, from other ways in which science and philosophy have actually employed pure concepts to achieve knowledge of something. Without explaining why, Hegel notes in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* that 'in one respect,

however, the temporal sequence of history is also distinguished from the sequence in the order of the concepts' (LHP I, 49/30). The riddle which this sentence contains can only be solved, in my view, if the *Doctrine of Being* is considered to reconstruct the concepts which allow thought to comprehend inorganic nature, yet which throughout the history of philosophy have been used at once to determine the principle of reality as such.<sup>21</sup> This reconstruction finally results in the concept of a substrate that is absolutely indifferent to its possible determinations (L I, 445–46/375). Given the immanent limit of the perspective opened up by the concept of being, this concept approaches the concept of essence in the highest possible manner. The deliberate one-sidedness of this general perspective is then resolved in the *Doctrine of Essence*.

I would like to emphasize that this transition does not correspond to a certain phase in the history of thought. As I see it, the *Logic* rather accomplishes three different cycles, each of which reconstructs the development of pure concepts from a particular angle.<sup>22</sup> Whereas the first cycle singles out such concepts as are suited to order sense perceptions, the second cycle, as we will see, treats concepts that somehow exhibit the opposition between essence and appearance. Just as the first cycle, the second begins by considering the most abstract determination of this opposition. The third cycle, finally, comprehends the concepts that – to some extent – have resolved this opposition and, hence, exhibit the self-determining activity proper to the concept as such.

#### 4. The *Doctrine of Essence*

As we saw in the previous chapter, Hegel considers his objective logic to replace the part of former metaphysics 'which was supposed to investigate the nature of *ens* in general, *ens* comprising both being and essence' (L I, 61/63). Contrary to the *Doctrine of Being*, the *Doctrine of Essence* is concerned with those concepts that allow thought to determine objects with regard to the opposition between essence and appearance. This basic ontological perspective underlies, in Hegel's view, any comprehension of something in terms of oppositions such as those between identity and difference, ground and that which is grounded, form and matter, the whole and its parts, inner and outer, force and expression, cause and effect. Thus, whereas the ontological perspective based on the concept of being allows us to interpret the fall of a stone with regard to either qualitative or quantitative determinations, the ontological perspective based on the concept of essence allows thought to comprehend this fall in terms of a force that is different from the way it expresses itself in this particular fall.

Hegel considers the concepts belonging to the sphere of essence to differ from those belonging to the sphere of being in that they have already established the opposition between their contrary determinations in the history of philosophy itself. Such concepts, 'however much they may be taken as isolated from each other', have no meaning without their counterpart (131/122). He regards the unity achieved by these concepts as a 'negative unity' because their contrary determinations at once belong together and negate their unity: there is no cause without effect, yet something which is determined as a cause cannot in the same respect be determined as an effect.<sup>23</sup> Deriving from the general concept of essence, all of these concepts in some way enact a movement to which Hegel refers as reflection:

'[E]ssence' rather contains 'semblance' [*Schein*] within itself as the infinite immanent movement that determines its immediacy as negativity and its negativity as immediacy. This movement is thus the appearance [*das Scheinen*] of 'essence' within itself. Enacting this its self-movement, 'essence' is *reflection*. (L II, 23–24/399)

The ontological perspective constituted by the concept of essence no longer comprehends beings as immediately given. It rather allows thought to negate the purported independence of the sphere of being, that is, to reduce this sphere to either 'semblance' or 'appearance'. This does not imply, however, that the sphere of essence, in its turn, is now defined as immediately given, for this sphere can only establish itself by dint of its difference from the sphere of being (cf. Enc I, § 112). Without first relating to tomatoes given by sense perception, it would be impossible to distinguish between their essence and actual appearance. Hegel, however, attributes this latter distinction not so much to finite human thought as to the principle of pure thought as such, that is, to the concept. On his account, the concept of essence annuls its initial unity with the concept of being in order to establish itself as an independent ontological perspective. It can only do so, however, by opposing its contrary determinations, which thus emerge as essence and appearance. Hegel considers this immanent 'self-reflection' of the concept of essence to constitute the condition of possibility of every external reflection, that is, of every mode of thought based on the difference between essence and appearance.

Hegel seems to assume that the external reflection made possible by the concept of essence has determined philosophy from Plato onward.

Yet it was only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in his view, that the concept of essence truly unfolded the totality of its immanent determinations. That is why philosophers such as Spinoza and Kant play such an important role in the *Doctrine of Essence*. As Hegel notes in the *Encyclopedia*,

This (most difficult) part of the *Logic* mainly contains the categories of metaphysics and of the sciences as such, – as the products of reflective understanding, which *at once* assumes the *independence* of the distinctions and affirms their relativity. [It] connects both [thoughts] by means of an ‘also’, as occurring simultaneously or subsequently, without bringing these thoughts together, without unifying them into the concept. (Enc I, § 114, rem.)

Governed by the understanding rather than by reason, modern philosophy pre-eminently relied on conceptual oppositions, that is, on concepts that do not immediately pertain to a manifold given in sense perception.<sup>24</sup> Just as the ontological perspective opened up by the concept of being, the ontological perspective opened up by the concept of essence underlies both empirical knowledge and the effort of philosophy to comprehend reality as such. This is to say that ontological oppositions such as those between cause and effect or form and matter can be used both to determine the content of empirical representations and ideas of reason such as the soul, the world as such, and God.

However, the ontological perspective opened up by the concept of essence does not really allow thought to achieve insight into the synthetic unity of essence and appearance. The spheres of essence and appearance must retain a certain independence, for otherwise we would not be able to recognize the whole in the totality of its parts or the cause in its effect. Thus, within the element opened up by the concept of essence, the unity of ‘essence’ and ‘being’ can only manifest itself as a *relation* between contrary moments.<sup>25</sup> The concept of essence allows thought to regard the essence of something as reflecting itself in the sphere of being, a sphere that is thereby reduced to the realm of appearances. This implies, for Hegel, that the conceptual determinations unfolding in the element of ‘essence’ are not just opposed to one another, but contain their contrary within themselves:

It is of the greatest importance to understand and retain this nature of the reflective determinations, namely, that their truth consists only

in their relation to one another, that therefore each in its very concept contains the other. Without this knowledge, not a single step can really be taken in philosophy. (L II, 73/438)

Although this step is only taken in the *Logic* itself, the history of modern philosophy already testifies to the effort at resolving the opposition between essence and appearance. As always, Hegel traces back this effort to the effort of the concept of essence to overcome its one-sidedness. That is why the *Doctrine of Essence* orders the concepts in such a way that the first synthetic concepts are as yet to a large extent indifferent to one another. This is the case when thought distinguishes between the essential and the unessential or between essence and semblance (18–19/394–95). Concepts such as form and matter, the inner and the outer, or cause and effect differ from one another only to the degree in which they have annulled the purported independence of their contrary determinations. The more they have done this, the better they are suited to determine the principle of reality as such.

However, as I noted above, the ontological perspective opened up by the concept of essence cannot completely dissolve the purported independence of its contrary conceptual determinations, for what we mean by ‘essence’ presupposes precisely that it retains a certain independence with regard to the beings in which it appears. In Hegel’s view, the highest synthetic unity that can be achieved within the ontological sphere of essence is expressed by concepts such as actuality, substance, and the absolute.<sup>26</sup> This does not entail, however, that philosophers such as Spinoza were able adequately to comprehend the true nature of these concepts. If philosophy would truly comprehend the absolute as principle of self-determination, that is, as infinite reflection into itself, it would precisely give up terms such as substance and actuality.<sup>27</sup> Even these concepts must therefore dissolve into a concept that explicitly and without reserve enacts itself as the synthesis of its conceptual determinations, that is, as concept.

## 5. The *Doctrine of the Concept*

The concepts treated in the *Doctrine of the Concept* fall outside the scope of both former metaphysics and Kant’s transcendental logic. Hegel here discusses concepts that have already established the synthesis of their contrary determinations in the history of philosophy itself, albeit merely in a limited way. Concepts such as teleology, subjectivity,

spirit, and freedom truly manifest, in Hegel's view, the self-determining activity proper to the concept as such. That is why these concepts allow philosophy to adequately comprehend such processes of self-determination as occur in the realms of nature, spirit, and thought as such (cf. 240/571). Insofar as philosophy relies on the ontological perspective constituted by the concept, it testifies to a mode of pure reason that is no longer governed by the understanding. Although even the concepts treated in the *Doctrine of the Concept* manifest the concept as such only in a limited manner, they are better suited to express speculative truths than concepts stemming from subordinate spheres of thought. Philosophy, Hegel writes, should not appeal to these spheres,

for its determinations...are unfitted for higher spheres and for the whole. The latter occurs whenever categories of the finite are applied to the infinite; the current determinations of force, substantiality, cause and effect, and so on, are likewise merely symbols for expressing, for example, vital or spiritual relationships, that is, they are untrue determinations...with respect to speculative relations as such.<sup>28</sup>

Abstracting from the perspectives opened up by the concepts of being and essence, the *Doctrine of the Concept* considers the history of thought only insofar as it testifies to the effort of comprehending processes of self-determination. That is why this part of the *Logic* considers such a wide range of subjects, including syllogisms, chemism, teleology, and knowledge.<sup>29</sup> In Hegel's view, each of these perspectives allows thought to comprehend its object – whatever it is – as resolving the purported independence of its contrary determinations.

This is not to say, however, that Hegel considers philosophy to have achieved an adequate comprehension of the principle underlying these processes. Thus, although Kant distinguished the realm of necessity from the realm of freedom, he allegedly failed to consider nature itself as exhibiting modes of self-determination. He failed, in Hegel's view, to recognize the absolute sway of the principle he assigned to the subject alone. It goes without saying that Hegel considered his speculative science to expose the true meaning of this principle for the first time. According to Hegel, the efforts of pure thought at overcoming its one-sided determinations necessarily culminate in speculative science itself. Insofar as this science allows pure thought (qua subject) to comprehend the totality of its immanent determinations (qua object), it



achieves the identity of subject and object to which Hegel refers as the absolute idea.<sup>30</sup>

In sum, the *Doctrine of the Concept* is devoted to concepts which testify to the negation of conceptual oppositions and which, for that reason, can be employed to comprehend such processes of self-determination as occur within the realms of nature, spirit, and pure thought. Just as the other parts of the *Logic*, the *Doctrine of the Concept* abstracts from the fact that philosophers throughout the history of philosophy have reflected on the nature of the syllogism, of teleological processes, or freedom. The *Logic* precisely differs from the actual history of thought in that it lets each pure concept actually establish the synthesis of its contrary determinations. To the extent that concepts have failed to do this in the history of philosophy itself, the *Logic* can be said to surrender them to the sway of absolute negativity. Thus, absolute negativity constitutes at once the animating principle of pure thought such as it has enacted itself in the history of thought and of the method that allows Hegel to reconstruct the totality of its determinations. At the end of the *Logic* he describes this negativity as

the innermost source of all activity, of all animate and spiritual movement, the dialectical soul that everything true possesses and through which alone it is true. . . . [T]he negative of the negative . . . is this sub-lating of the contradiction. Just as little as contradiction is it an act of external reflection, but rather the innermost, most objective moment of life and spirit, through which a subject, a person, a free being, exists.<sup>31</sup>

In the following sections I will consider Hegel's conception of negativity in more detail, beginning with its role in the most simple form of empirical knowledge. I therefore return once more to the *Doctrine of Being*.

## 6. The Concept of Something

Contrary to the *Doctrine of the Concept*, I have argued, the *Doctrine of Being* investigates those pure concepts that – during the history of philosophy – have not yet explicitly opposed and unified their contrary determinations. The concept of being is a good example of this. Hegel maintains, however, that limited forms of self-determining activity can be recognized already in concepts such as something, infinity, and being-for-itself, that is, in concepts belonging to the sphere of

being.<sup>32</sup> In his view, the concept of something is the first to annul the opposition of its contrary moments, that is, to enact a form of absolute negativity:

‘Something’ is the *first negation of the negation*, as simple self-relation in the form of being.... However, ‘something’ is still a very superficial determination.... As ‘something’, the negative of the negative is only the beginning of the subject, – the being-within-itself [is here] as yet completely undetermined. It further determines itself, first, as that which is for itself, and so on, and only in the concept does it attain the concrete intensity of the subject. All these determinations are based on the negative unity with itself. (L I, 123–24/115)

What this means may be clarified by means of a simple example. If I answered the question as to what something is by saying that it is red, I would have determined my empirical representations in a most inadequate way. This is already less so if I answered this question by determining these representations as ‘something’ and, on that basis, as tomato or strawberry. For in the latter case I would not have predicated one out of two contrary determinations of something, but I would rather have implied that contrary determinations such as red and non-red constitute possible determinations of this underlying ‘something’ itself.<sup>33</sup> The concept of something thus allows me to determine that which can undergo certain changes – from non-red into red, for example – while remaining self-identical. Contrary to concepts such as substance and subject, however, the concept of something expresses this identity in a very poor manner. For by determining something as ‘something’ I presuppose that its relation to other things is characterized by indifference.

Rather than elaborating on the actual employment of the concept of something, Hegel focuses on its proper content, that is, on its attempt at establishing the synthesis of its contrary determinations. Seen from Hegel’s perspective, the concept of something *itself* distinguishes itself from its actual determination so as to posit the latter over against itself. Thus, it can be considered to negate the unity of itself and its actual determination. Yet when I determine something as red, the difference between the tomato I see and its actual redness is immediately resolved. For my judgment not so much affirms that the tomato is opposed to its redness as that the redness constitutes one of its proper determinations. By judging that something is red I affirm, as Hegel might say, the negative unity of itself and its actual determination.

That is why Hegel maintains in the passage quoted above that the concept of something is the first to enact the negation of the negation: it allows us, first, to distinguish the tomato from its redness and, second, to negate the opposition between the tomato and its redness. Whenever thought, in pronouncing judgments, posits the concrete unity of something and its actual determination, it enacts a negation of a negation. According to Hegel, this subjective activity is made possible by the negation of the negation enacted by the concept of something itself. This form of negation is what he calls self-mediation or absolute negativity:

[O]ne should here distinguish between the *first* negation, as negation *in general*, and the second negation, the negation of the negation. Whereas the latter is concrete, *absolute* negativity, the former is only *abstract* negativity. 'Something' is the negation of the negation *in the form of being*; for this second negation is the restoring of the simple self-relation; but this implies that 'something' is equally the *mediation of itself with itself*. Already in the simple form of 'something', then still more in 'being-for-itself', 'subject', and so on, self-mediation is present. . . . [S]elf-mediation actually occurs in 'something' insofar as it is determined as a simple identity. (L I, 124/115–16)

By claiming that this tomato is not red I enact an abstract negation. Yet such empirical judgments, whether positive or negative, are made possible, according to Hegel, by the self-negating activity exerted by the concept of something itself. Since this concept belongs to the sphere of being, however, absolute negativity only begins to manifest itself at this level.

Hegel's effort to interpret even a simple concept such as something in terms of absolute negativity may well seem contrived. Yet I consider it important that he conceives of the concept 'something' as the attempt at constituting itself as unity by, first, opposing itself to its actual determination and, second, resolving this opposition. It actualizes itself, in other words, by setting out from the moment at which it has not yet distinguished itself from his actual determination and hence has not even constituted itself *as* something. If this is true, then Hegel seems to presuppose something like an entanglement that precedes the movement in which the concept of something opposes its actual determination so as to establish the synthesis of itself and this determination. This preceding entanglement would seem to be presupposed whenever we determine what we actually see by distinguishing between something

and its color or size. In the *Logic*, however, this preceding entanglement is hardly ever mentioned.<sup>34</sup>

## 7. The Guises of Absolute Negativity

In this section I hope to further clarify the structure of the *Logic* by arguing that its three parts are defined by abstract, contradictory, and absolute negativity, each of which constitutes a particular guise of absolute negativity. We have seen that Hegel introduces the term 'absolute negativity' while considering the concept of something, that is, with respect to a concept that has begun to enact the negation of the negation by itself. This is, so to speak, the moment at which absolute negativity begins to manifest itself 'for us' (cf. L II, 566/837). Yet it here manifests itself only at the level of a single concept and not yet as the absolute force that dissolves all determinate concepts into less one-sided ones. It is important, I hold, to distinguish clearly between these two levels at which absolute negativity is at work. On the one hand, this negativity pertains to the movement which each particular concept to some extent has enacted in the history of philosophy itself. On the other hand, it constitutes the methodical principle of the *Logic* as a whole.<sup>35</sup>

The concept 'something' can be taken as an example to clarify this difference. Insofar as this concept expresses the self-determining activity proper to the concept as such, it can be said to enact the negation of the negation by itself. In this respect, it differs from abstract concepts such as being and nothing. On the other hand, however, the concept 'something' no less than all other finite concepts relates to an otherness it is unable to incorporate. It stands, as Hegel puts it,

in a relation to its otherness and is not simply its otherness. The otherness is at once contained in it and also still separate from it; it is a being-for-other.<sup>36</sup>

Since something is what it is by dint of its distinction from something else, the concept 'something' presupposes the concept 'other'. Since it cannot incorporate this its contrary into itself, it remains at odds with the concept as such. The effort of the concept 'something' to establish the synthesis of its contrary determinations does not result, therefore, in its self-actualization, but rather in a different, less one-sided concept (L I, 139/129). Seen from this perspective, the concept 'something' must

surrender no less than the concepts of being and nothing to the absolute negativity which constitutes the life-pulse of the *Logic* as a whole.

The difference between the concepts treated in the *Logic* depends exclusively on the extent to which they have actually opposed and unified their contrary determinations in the history of philosophy itself.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the more the *Logic* advances, the more it treats of concepts that testify to the absolute negativity proper to the concept as such. Yet all finite concepts must submit to the absolute negativity that constitutes the element of Hegel's method. This negativity forces each of them to turn into less one-sided ones until a concept emerges that comprehends its contrary as its proper moment in an absolute way. This concept – the absolute idea – exhibits the self-determining activity of the concept as such in the highest possible manner.

The two levels I have so far distinguished pertain to the ways in which absolute negativity *enacts* itself in the *Logic*. There is, however, a third level at which the *Logic* is concerned with absolute negativity. Hegel repeatedly suggests that concepts such as 'not', 'nothing', and 'negation' constitute inadequate guises of absolute negativity. In my view, he thus attempts to account for the ways in which philosophers have *conceived of* absolute negativity. Within the history of philosophy, this negativity emerged in the guise of concepts such as 'nothing', 'negation', 'contradiction', and 'double negation', none of which, Hegel holds, renders its true significance. Yet it seems to me that Hegel uses these concepts to refer to the modes of absolute negativity that inform the three parts of the *Logic*. The level at which this is done – a level very difficult to discern from the other two – is now to be examined in more detail.

We have seen that Hegel comprehends the concept 'something' by distinguishing between abstract and absolute negativity. By affirming that the tomato I see is not red, my judgment relies on abstract negativity. I take Hegel to be arguing that this abstract negativity has traditionally been understood in terms of the concept 'nothing'.<sup>38</sup> He refers to this concept as, for example, 'the abstract, immediate negation, ... the negation devoid of any relations'.<sup>39</sup> Thus, whereas absolute negativity underlies any mode of self-determining activity, abstract negativity underlies modes of negation that neither posit nor resolve the opposition between contrary determinations.

This means, in my view, that all qualitative and quantitative determinations of objects rely on abstract negativity. Since the *Doctrine of Being* as a whole is concerned with these determinations, it might be argued that all the concepts treated in this part of the *Logic* are

governed by abstract negativity. Hegel, as we have seen, indeed regards these concepts as 'imperfect guises of the negation in being' (174/157). However, even an abstract concept such as being is characterized by the tension between abstract and absolute negativity rather than by abstract negativity alone. For while the conceptual sphere at stake in the *Doctrine of Being* as a whole is defined by abstract negativity, each of the concepts that belong to this sphere consists in the attempt at establishing the synthesis of its contrary moments. That is why Hegel considers concepts such as something and being-for-itself to begin to exhibit the force of absolute negativity. Yet their attempts at self-determination are thwarted, as it were, by the abstract negativity that constitutes their proper element. As Hegel puts it, the concept of something can enact the negation of the negation merely 'in the form of being' (124/115–16).

Let me now turn to the *Doctrine of Essence*. As I noted above, Hegel considers the concept of nothing – such as it has been understood in the philosophical tradition – as a particular guise of absolute negativity. Apparently, the concept of nothing is not just one concept among many others, but at once refers to the negativity constitutive of the *Logic* as a whole. However, the concept of nothing does not exhibit the proper nature of this negativity, but rather concerns one of its proper moments, namely, abstract negativity. Hegel, it should be emphasized, does not oppose abstract and absolute negativity, but conceives of abstract negativity as a particular moment, guise, or determination of absolute negativity itself. As was argued above, this guise is constitutive of the conceptual sphere treated in the *Doctrine of Being*. In a similar vein, Hegel considers the concept of contradiction in a twofold way. On the one hand, he treats it as one of the many concepts belonging to the *Doctrine of Essence*. On the other hand, he takes it to refer to the mode of negativity that governs the *Doctrine of Essence* as a whole. As he remarks in the *Encyclopedia*,

The sphere of essence... is therefore the sphere of the *posited contradiction*, whereas in the sphere of being this contradiction is merely *in itself*. (Enc I, § 114)

The contradiction which makes its appearance in 'opposition'... is the root of all movement and vitality; it is only insofar as something contains a contradiction within itself that it moves, has an urge and activity. (L II, 74–75/439)

Clearly, this is not the way in which philosophy has traditionally conceived of the concept of contradiction. According to traditional logic, something cannot be at once completely red and not red. Considered from this perspective, Hegel remarks, contradictory claims about an object cannot but result in 'nothing'.<sup>40</sup> In his view, this negative conception of contradictions informs Kant's doctrine of the antinomies as well as other forms of skepticism.<sup>41</sup>

Seen from a speculative perspective, conversely, the concept of contradiction rather pertains to the unfolding and resolution of oppositions, that is, to a particular mode of absolute negativity. Thus, a hungry animal can be said to be driven by the contradiction between what it is in itself (satisfied) and its actual determination (hungry). In order to resolve this contradiction, the animal must first posit its hunger as that which it is not itself.<sup>42</sup> For Hegel, accordingly, an opposition is not just an opposition, but emerges from the contradiction between that which something is in itself and its actual determination.<sup>43</sup>

As we have seen, Hegel considers pure concepts in the same light as plants, animals, and finite forms of human spirit. Just as hungry animals, pure concepts are driven by the attempt at establishing the synthesis of their contrary determinations. The concepts treated in the *Doctrine of Essence* differ from those treated in the *Doctrine of Being* in that they have actually posited the opposition between their contrary determinations, for example, between identity and difference or between the whole and its parts. This means, in my view, that they are governed by a mode of negativity – which I propose to call contradictory negativity – that is neither abstract nor absolute. This negativity differs from abstract negativity in that it allows concepts to posit the opposition between their contrary determinations. It differs from absolute negativity, on the other hand, in that it does not allow concepts completely to resolve the purported independence of their contrary determinations. I must consider the essence of something to be independent, at least to some extent, from the beings in which it appears, and the same holds of conceptual oppositions such as those between the whole and its parts or cause and effect. Insofar as the concepts examined in the *Doctrine of Essence* testify to the attempt at resolving such oppositions, they testify to the force of absolute negativity. However, these attempts necessarily remain bound to the contradictory negativity constitutive of this part of the *Logic* as a whole. That is why each of the concepts treated here must yield to the absolute negativity that forces them to turn into a less one-sided concept. Since Hegel, as was argued in the previous chapter, attributes the production of conceptual

oppositions to a mode of philosophy defined by the understanding, modern philosophy might be considered to rely on this contradictory negativity.

Just as Hegel employs the classical concepts of nothing and contradiction to refer to the modes of negativity proper to the spheres of being and essence, he uses such concepts as affirmation, double negation, and freedom to refer to the mode of negativity that governs the concepts treated in the *Doctrine of the Concept*. Since Hegel regards the concept of nothing to constitute a first determination of absolute negativity, he can maintain – as he does in the *Encyclopedia* – that freedom is the highest mode of the ‘nothing’:

The highest mode of the ‘nothing’ for itself would be freedom, but this freedom is the mode of negativity that has deepened itself so as to reach the highest intensity. Thus it is itself affirmation, and even absolute affirmation.<sup>44</sup>

At first sight, the term ‘affirmation’ seems to refer to the double negation at stake in judgments which deny, for instance, that this tomato is not red. In my view, however, this term rather refers to the absolute negativity that inheres in everything which attempts to determine itself by opposing and unifying its contrary determinations. Another term for this self-determining activity – usually attributed to human beings alone – is freedom.

In order to comprehend the modes of self-determination exhibited in the realms of nature, spirit, and pure thought itself, philosophy should rely, according to Hegel, on a concept that has established the unity of its contrary determinations in an absolute way. The *Doctrine of the Concept* treats such concepts as in the history of philosophy itself have already resolved, to a certain extent, the opposition between their contrary determinations. Thus, a concept such as teleology differs from concepts such as ground or force – treated in the *Doctrine of Essence* – in that it explicitly refers to the self-determining activity proper to the concept as such. For it entails, as we will see in Chapter 8, the unity of, on the one hand, the end and, on the other, the means it employs to actualize itself. However, even concepts such as teleology and life achieve the unity of their contrary determinations in a one-sided manner. That is why they must no less than other finite concepts turn into less one-sided concepts. They must yield to the sway of absolute negativity, accordingly, until the *Logic* reaches a concept that refers exclusively to the self-comprehension of pure thought achieved in speculative science itself.



## 8. The Cunning of the Concept

Now that the three parts of the *Logic* have been interpreted with regard to the particular modes of negativity by which they are defined, I will attempt to reconstruct Hegel's largely implicit understanding of the *relation* between the conceptual spheres treated in these parts. As we have seen, the sequence of the three parts of the *Logic* does not correspond to the various stages of the history of philosophy (except insofar as its beginning and end are concerned). This sequence rather depends on the organizing principle of Hegel's philosophy as a whole. Accordingly, the conceptual spheres opened up by the concepts of being, essence, and the concept as such must be conceived as a unity rather than as independent totalities.

But how should we conceive of their unity? As I see it, Hegel's earlier conception of the relation between reason and the understanding offers an important key to answering this question. Both Kant and Hegel saw reason as the source of philosophical speculation. As was argued in Chapter 2.2, Hegel considers the – Kantian – opposition between reason and the understanding to result from the act by means of which reason divides off and opposes its discursive moment, which only thus emerges as understanding. The understanding, in its turn, can be employed to determine something by means of single predicates, as happens both in the sciences and in philosophy. However, the understanding is also the mode of thought that produces conceptual oppositions, as happens pre-eminently in modern philosophy.

Now it seems to me that the threefold structure of the *Logic* corresponds to these three modes of thought. On this account, the *Doctrine of Being* would correspond to the understanding insofar as it predicates single pure concepts of something (whether appearances or the principle of reality as such). Whereas the *Doctrine of Essence*, for its part, would correspond to the understanding insofar as it produces conceptual oppositions, the *Doctrine of the Concept* would correspond to a mode of pure reason that attempts to disentangle itself from the understanding so as to establish the unity of contrary determinations. If this comparison makes sense, then Hegel must have considered the spheres of being and essence to result from the act by means of which the concept as such divides off these subordinate spheres from itself. On this view, the actual beginning of the *Doctrine of Being* would conceal a beginning that can hardly be articulated, perhaps, within the *Logic* itself.

But let me turn to some of the oblique passages in the *Logic* that seem to address this issue. At the beginning of the *Doctrine of Essence*,

Hegel notes that the emergence of the conceptual sphere defined by the concept of essence must not be understood in merely subjective terms:

When this movement is represented as the course of knowing, then this beginning with 'being', and the development that sublates it, reaching 'essence' as a mediated result, seems to be an activity of knowing. . . . But this course is the movement of 'being' itself . . . . If, therefore, the absolute was first defined as 'being', it is now defined as 'essence'. (L II, 13/389)

But 'essence' as it has here come to be, is what it is through a negativity which is not foreign to it, but is its very own, the infinite movement of being. (14/390)

Hegel here maintains, it seems to me, that the transition from the sphere of being to the sphere of essence cannot be explained by arguing that subjective thought at some point became dissatisfied with the possibilities provided by the sphere of being. Since empirical investigations of nature and reflections on the principle of reality have always gone hand in hand, such a transition has never actually occurred. The same obtains of the sphere of the concept. If this is the case, then Hegel's reflection on the transition between these ontological spheres must pertain to the structure of the *Logic* itself. That is why Hegel notes, in my view, that his reflection concerns the concept of essence such 'as it has here come to be'. Whereas the spheres of being, essence, and the concept have actually always been intertwined, Hegel disentangles them in order to expose the conditions of possibility of the history of thought.

Seen in this way, Hegel's reflection on the transition between being and essence concerns the incapacity of the ontological perspective defined by the concept of being adequately to determine the principle of reality as such (to which Hegel here refers, again, as the absolute). The 'infinite movement' enacted by the concept of being consists in the unfolding of the totality of concepts governed by abstract negativity. The moment at which the concept of being reaches its limit – the end of the *Doctrine of Being* – is at once the moment at which the concept of essence begins to negate the purported comprehensiveness of the concept of being so as to develop into an ontological perspective of its own (cf. 16/391). The concept of essence thus posits

itself, in its turn, as the comprehensive ontological perspective to which the *Doctrine of Essence* is devoted. As we have seen, the concepts it originates increasingly resolve the purported independence of their contrary determinations. Yet at the moment the concept of essence has achieved this unity in the highest possible way, given its proper limit, it turns into the ontological perspective constituted by the concept as such. The movement enacted by the concept of essence, Hegel writes,

consists in positing within itself the negation or determination, thereby ... becoming as infinite being-for-itself what it is in itself. It thus ... becomes the *concept*. (16/391)

The ontological perspective opened up by the concept as such gives rise, as we have seen, to concepts that truly exhibit the unity of their contrary determinations. It would be misguided, however, to comprehend the emergence of this perspective exclusively as resulting from the movement in which the preceding perspective, that is, essence, is forced to give up its purported comprehensiveness. Hegel, I would contend, rather traces back the unfolding of both ontological perspectives – being and essence – to the act by means of which the concept *itself* divides off its contrary moments and lets them gain independence. Thus, Hegel maintains with respect to the concept that

‘[b]eing’ and ‘essence’ are ... the moments of its *becoming*; but [the concept] is their *foundation* and *truth* as the identity in which they are dissolved and contained. They are contained in it because it is their result, but no longer as ‘being’ and ‘essence’. That determination they possess only insofar as they have not returned into this their unity.<sup>45</sup>

Hegel here clearly states that the concept as such precedes its contrary moments, that is, being and essence. He does not point out, however, why the concept should begin by distinguishing the conceptual sphere of being, rather than that of essence, from itself. The concept does this, in my view, because *the ontological perspective opened up by the concept of being first allowed thought to order its sense perceptions and, hence, to acquire knowledge of something*. In other words, the concept first has to push forward, as it were, the concept of being, so as to let it establish the ontological perspective constitutive of the most simple forms of

empirical and philosophical knowledge.<sup>46</sup> On this view, the beginning of the *Logic* deliberately repeats the retreat of the concept as such – or its self-limitation – that Hegel considers to have originated the actual history of thought. Since it is only by dint of this retreat that science and philosophy could develop at all, it might well be called the cunning of the concept.

Whereas the ontological perspective opened up by the concept of being allows thought to determine appearances, it is ill-suited, as we have seen, to determine the principle of reality as such. That is why the concept as such lets the concept of essence, in its turn, unfold its immanent determinations. Only when the concept of essence has equally exhausted its possibilities does the ontological perspective constituted by the concept as such appear on the scene of philosophy. This perspective, Hegel notes in the passage quoted above, actualizes itself by reducing the ontological perspectives constituted by being and essence to moments, that is, by establishing their unity.

On this account, each part of the *Logic* isolates and reconstructs one of the conceptual spheres constitutive of the history of pure thought. In order to comprehend their unity, Hegel cannot but attribute the origin of their emergence to the concept as such. Yet this is something which Hegel at the beginning of the *Logic* cannot yet make explicit. The actual order in which the *Logic* treats these spheres misleadingly suggests, therefore, that their development – beginning with the concept of being – corresponds to the temporal order of the history of pure thought. As emerges toward the end of the work, Hegel was well aware of this problem:

The method, which thus winds itself into a circle, cannot anticipate in a temporal development that the beginning is, as such, already something derived.<sup>47</sup>

Since the *Logic* begins at the moment that the concept of being has already established itself as the basis of an ontological perspective, there is little textual evidence to be found for the view I have advanced. I believe, however, that the passages cited above make it plausible that the *Logic* presupposes the act by which the concept, first, opposes the sphere of being to the sphere of essence and, second, negates their purported independence so as to establish itself as their unity. This means that the absolute principle of thought, that is, the concept, must be distinguished from the actual beginning of its development, in this case the concept of being. To be more precise, the concept must distinguish

*itself* from its moment of immediacy in order to posit itself as absolute principle:

Now although the concept is to be regarded not merely as subjective presupposition, but as absolute foundation, it can be so only insofar as it has *established* itself as foundation. . . . Hence this foundation, though indeed an immediate, must have made itself immediate through the sublation of mediation. (245/576)

Even though the ensuing self-actualization of the concept does not correspond to the stages of the history of philosophy, its three distinguished moments constitute the essential moments of this very history. Hegel could not have achieved insight into the history of pure thought, therefore, without attributing the pure concepts produced throughout the history of thought to the three possible guises of the concept as such. If this is true, then it cannot be taken for granted that the position which Hegel invites his readers to adopt at the beginning of the *Logic* (L I, 68–69/70) coincides with the insight into the unfolding of the concept which occurs, so to speak, behind their back.

## 9. The Method of Speculative Science

Drawing on the account of negativity presented so far, this final section examines Hegel's remarks on the method of speculative science at the end of the *Doctrine of the Concept*.<sup>48</sup> Referring to this method as the movement of the concept as such (L II, 550–51/825–26), Hegel considers it to be propelled by two negations (563/835). The 'absolute method', as Hegel puts it, begins by examining an abstract, general concept (555/829). It observes this concept in such a way that it turns out to include its contrary determination. At the beginning this relation has not yet become present for thought. Since Hegel abstracts from this subjective point of view, he maintains that the concept itself has not yet opposed its contrary determinations. Everything that is merely implicit has the urge to make itself explicit. A concept can only posit the opposition between itself and its contrary moment by positing the latter over against itself. This entails that it must perish itself, for thought cannot affirm two contrary contents at once. The concept that results from this first negation is at first sight as one-sided as the first. Contrary to the first concept, however, it refers explicitly to its opposite: when I determine something as 'not red' I articulate both its possible redness

and its actual state of being not red. Since the second concept results from a 'determinate negation', it has retained the content of the first concept.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the second concept differs from the first in that it has posited the opposition between its contrary moments.

Hegel notes that this relation between contrary determinations is 'already posited and present for thought' (562/835). Although modern science and philosophy have determined their objects by means of conceptual oppositions, they usually do not realize that these oppositions contradict the unity of the contrary determinations involved. According to the speculative method, the second concept contains the unity of its contrary determinations just as much as the first. Insofar as it has posited the opposition between these determinations it cannot at once posit their unity. That is why the second concept suffers as much as the first from the contradiction between what it is in itself and the way it has become present for thought. It can only resolve this contradiction by positing the unity of its contrary determinations. Hegel summarizes this development as follows:

Because the first or the immediate is *implicitly* the concept, and consequently is also only *implicitly* the negative, its dialectical moment consists in positing within itself the *difference* that it *implicitly* contains. The second, on the contrary, is itself the determinate moment, the difference or relationship; therefore its dialectical moment consists in positing the *unity* that is contained in it.<sup>50</sup>

Hegel calls this latter positing 'the negative of the negative' (563/835). But do his references to the negation of the negation adequately render the way in which the *Logic* actually proceeds? Can the overall structure of the *Logic*, for example, really be clarified by considering the sphere of essence to negate the sphere of being, and the sphere of the concept to negate the sphere of essence? Hegel's linear description of his method makes it very hard to see, in my view, that both spheres contain their contrary determination within themselves and, moreover, that both are impelled from within to establish the synthesis of their contrary determinations. This aspect of Hegel's method emerges much more clearly in the following passage from the *Doctrine of Being*, which concerns the resolution of the concepts of quality and quantity into the concept of measure:

The *positing* of the totality requires the *double* transition, not only of the one determination into its other, but equally the transition

of this other, its return, into the first. The first transition yields the identity of both, but at first only in itself or in principle; quality is contained in quantity, but this is still a one-sided determination. That the converse is equally true, namely, that quantity is contained in quality, ... this results from the second transition. ... This observation on the necessity of the *double* transition is of great importance for the scientific method as a whole. (L I, 384/323)

Contrary to the end of the *Doctrine of the Concept*, this passage makes it clear that quality and quantity are from the outset 'contained' in one another. Moreover, as we have seen, Hegel considers all contrary determinations – even abstract ones such as being and nothing – to contain their contrary within themselves (L I, 112/106). He also emphasizes this reciprocity when referring, in a passage from the *Doctrine of Essence* already quoted, to the nature of the reflective determinations:

It is of the greatest importance to understand and retain this nature of the reflective determinations, namely, that their truth consists only in their relation to one another, that therefore each in its very concept contains the other. (L II, 73/438, tr. mod)

If the overall structure of the *Logic* is viewed in this light, then it cannot simply be said, to return to my example, that the sphere of being is negated by the sphere of essence and the sphere of essence by that of the concept. For in this case we lose sight of the negations enacted by the sphere of being itself. Given Hegel's remarks, discussed above, on the intricate relation between these spheres, it should rather be said that 'being' negates its initial unity with 'essence' so as to posit itself as a comprehensive determination of the concept as such. Forced to give up – or negate – its purported comprehensiveness, it turns into a subordinate moment of 'essence', thus manifesting itself as 'appearance'. 'Essence', for its part, negates its unity with 'being' so as to posit itself as an equally comprehensive determination of the concept as such. It negates the purported comprehensiveness of 'being' by reducing it to one of its proper moments. If it succeeds in doing so, however, both 'being' and 'essence' are reduced to moments of the concept as such.

Considered in this way, the contrary determinations of a particular concept must both give up their purported comprehensiveness, and both enact a double negation to achieve their synthesis.<sup>51</sup> By focusing

on this reciprocity, the method employed in the *Logic*, I would suggest, turns out to be essentially modeled on Hegel's earlier insight into tragic conflicts. Yet it seems to me that the tragic layer of his method is obscured by Hegel's own description of his method in terms of two subsequent negations. This description takes recourse to a conception of dialectics according to which a particular determination necessarily turns into its contrary. Although this conception of dialectics more easily complies with the linearity of the text and with the idea that conflicts necessarily yield their resolution, it does not do justice to the reciprocity of contrary determinations which, in my view, is presupposed throughout the *Logic*.

Once this reciprocity is brought out, it also becomes possible to ask whether contrary determinations, both containing their contrary, establish their opposition by negating their initial unity or rather their mutual entanglement. Whence the abstraction enacted by Parmenides, when he isolated 'being' from its contrary determination? And whence Hegel's repetition of this act at the outset of the *Logic*? Hegel's own reflection on his method begins by considering the moment at which a concept has already established itself as an abstract identity, but he does not indicate whence this abstraction begins. In the next chapter I hope to trace the tragic element of the method which informs Hegel's treatment of particular concepts.



# 4

## Tragedy and Logic

### 1. Introduction

Hegel notes in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* that philosophical systems do not exist independently, but that ‘the fate of these determinations must come about, that is, they must be ... reduced to moments’ (LHP I, 54/35). Whereas the particular determinations of the concept as such all meet their fate in the history of philosophy, only the *Logic* truly comprehends the necessity of this reduction. It was argued in the previous chapter that Hegel regards the totality of pure concepts as impelled by absolute negativity to establish the synthesis of their contrary determinations. Insofar as they have not yet done this in the history of philosophy itself, they relate to this negativity as to a tragic fate. Insofar as pure concepts have themselves established the synthesis of their contrary determinations, they have transformed this fate into the capacity to determine themselves from within.<sup>1</sup> It is, therefore, not difficult to see why Hegel should regard the destiny of specific pure concepts as tragic.

As we saw in Chapter 1, the *Essay on Natural Law* considers tragedy to expose (1) the initial entanglement of the contrary determinations of ethical life, (2) the unfolding of their opposition, and (3) the resolution of their conflict. We also saw that Hegel regards the negativity which exposes and dissolves the tragic conflict between contrary determinations as the animating principle not just of ethical life, but of nature, spirit, and thought as such. In this chapter I argue that Hegel draws on his early conception of tragic conflicts to maintain that the opposition between purely conceptual determinations is necessarily resolved. Only

by taking this step could he reconstruct, in my view, the sequence of pure concepts that have emerged in the history of thought.

This chapter focuses on Hegel's exposition of the concept of infinity in the *Doctrine of Being* because I regard it as well suited to clarify the nature of Hegel's method. This section is equally well suited, I hold, to show that the *Logic* can incorporate the tragic only by effacing the entanglement of contrary determinations, an effacement that has already begun in the *Essay on Natural Law*.<sup>2</sup> Yet even in the *Logic* this effacement is not complete. In order to bridge the apparent gap between the realms of tragedy and logic, I first reconsider Hegel's reading of Kant's doctrine of the antinomies. I further look for traces of the tragic by examining Hegel's treatment of the concepts 'being-for-itself' and 'contradiction'. The last section returns to Hegel's account of human culture by contending that his critique of modern philosophy in the *Logic* parallels his criticism of modern culture in the *Phenomenology*. This further supports my view that Hegel's conception of tragic conflicts by no means pertains to Greek culture alone.

## 2. The Tragic Strand of Kant's Doctrine of the Antinomies

Hegel maintains in the *Doctrine of Essence*, as we have seen, that both former metaphysics and Kant's transcendental idealism presuppose the relative independence of contrary determinations such as infinity and finitude, form and matter, the whole and its parts, or the inner and the outer. In his view, these modes of philosophy fail to comprehend the synthetic unity of such oppositions. Kant himself, on the other hand, rather opposed former metaphysics by arguing that any attempt at determining ideas of reason by means of pure concepts was doomed to fail. As soon as thought transcends the realm of appearances, in his view, it cannot but yield contrary synthetic a priori judgments that both purport to be comprehensive. It might be argued, accordingly, that Kant's philosophy implies a tragic rather than a dialectical conception of the relation between contrary conceptual determinations.

This emerges above all from his doctrine of the antinomies. Kant here seeks to show that former metaphysics and empiricism sought to determine the world as either infinite or finite, its elements as either infinitely divisible or not, its events as either absolutely submitted to causality or not, and, finally, as either containing or not containing a necessary being.<sup>3</sup> Antinomies arise, Kant notes, when reason assumes 'an attitude of dogmatic stubbornness, setting its mind rigidly to certain assertions without giving a fair hearing to the grounds for

the opposite'.<sup>4</sup> Now it seems to me that Kant's account of the conflict between purely conceptual determinations corresponds to Hegel's account of the way in which Antigone and Creon held their determinations of justice to be absolutely comprehensive. Conversely, the conflict between Antigone and Creon might be said to represent an 'antinomy' between archaic and rational determinations of justice. Thus, Kant might be said to expose the tragic downfall of philosophy that occurs whenever it claims the comprehensiveness of one-sided conceptual determinations.

Hegel elaborated his first interpretation of Kant's doctrine of the antinomies in *Faith and Knowledge*. It is, in my view, not by coincidence that this text was published around the same time as the *Essay on Natural Law*.<sup>5</sup> As we have seen, Hegel maintains in this latter text that the contrary determinations of ethical life cannot be reconciled unless they have first been disentangled. Just before turning to ancient tragedy, he notes with regard to Plato's *Republic* that the system of property and the juridical relationships it involves is bound

to destroy free ethical life wherever the latter is intermingled [*vermischt*] with those relationships and not from the start kept separate from them and their consequences. (NL 493/103)

It is therefore crucial for any state to deliberately separate the sphere of free ethical life from the sphere of property or mere necessity. Only thus, Hegel suggests, can their subsequent opposition be subordinated to their absolute identity:

By overcoming this confusion of principles, and their established and conscious separation, each of them is done justice, and only that which ought to be is brought into existence, namely, the reality of ethical life as absolute indifference. (NL 494/104)

While discussing Kant's *Critique* in *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel equally claims that contrary determinations should at least be separated from one another. He praises Kant for having begun to resolve the antinomies yielded by conceptual oppositions such as necessity and freedom, or the sensible and the intelligible. Claiming to develop Kant's insight further, he suggests that antinomies emerge if such contrary determinations are related to one another *in the wrong way*. Kant's dissolution of the antinomies, he writes, consists in

not relating the oppositions in this defective manner [*dürftige Weise*], but to think of them as absolutely heterogeneous and without communion at all. And indeed, in comparison with the defective and unsubstantial connection of freedom and necessity, of the intelligible and the sensible world, their completely pure separation has the merit of [permitting] the pure positing of their absolute identity. Yet this is not what Kant had in view when he separated them so purely.<sup>6</sup>

On Hegel's account, Kant dissolved the conceptual oppositions merely in a negative way.<sup>7</sup> He can be considered to move beyond Kant, accordingly, by subordinating the 'tragic' conflict between thesis and antithesis analyzed by Kant to their synthetic unity. Seen from Hegel's perspective, the various modifications of the opposition between essence and appearance – at stake in the antinomies – result from the movement in which the sphere of essence itself opposes that which it is in itself (essence) to that which it is not (appearance). Since it enacts this opposition by itself, the sphere of essence can also incorporate its contrary into itself so as to establish itself as the absolute identity of both.

The similarities between Hegel's early interpretations of Kant's doctrine of the antinomies and of Greek tragedy are evident, it seems to me. This is quite understandable as well, since Hegel in both cases is concerned with the absolute negativity he holds governs pure thought no less than natural ethical life. Hegel's reading of Kant's doctrine of the antinomies may well have prompted him, I would suggest, to transform the negativity at work in tragic conflicts into a principle governing purely conceptual conflicts as well. It is also possible, on the other hand, that he developed his view of Kant's doctrine of the antinomies in light of his early interpretation of tragedy. In any case, Hegel must have realized at some point that conflicts between the contrary determinations of pure concepts and of ethical life can both be resolved by letting these determinations establish their synthetic unity.

There is, in my view, only one element of Hegel's early accounts of Kant and Greek tragedy that gets lost on the way. This is – as one might by now expect – the view that the initial entanglement of contrary determinations can and must be overcome in favor of their synthetic unity. Even when discussing the Kantian antinomies in the *Logic* Hegel never comes back to what he saw as the 'defective' relation between sensibility and thought Kant had attributed to Locke, Leibniz, and Wolff. As soon as the *Logic* begins, it is not the entanglement of contrary conceptual determinations, but rather the abstract identity of a concept that constitutes the beginning of its attempt at self-actualization. Since, moreover,

this abstract identity from the outset contains its contrary determination, it is in fact their synthetic unity – albeit merely such as it is ‘in itself’ – that replaces the initial entanglement of contrary conceptual determinations. Hegel, in other words, could not have developed the *Logic* without presupposing that the concept as such has once and for all resolved the initial entanglement of its contrary determinations so as to establish itself as the absolute principle of thought.

Although Kant’s doctrine of the antinomies seems to imply a conception of the conflict between conceptual determinations that is tragic rather than dialectical, Kant was no more than Hegel in the position to interpret this conflict in terms of their initial entanglement. Even though Kant in the doctrine of the antinomies seems to consider the relation between contrary conceptual determinations as symmetrical, he did not pursue the question as to their ‘common root’. It might be argued that Kant’s position ultimately differs from Hegel’s in that Kant, unknowingly, abstracted from the synthetic unity of contrary determinations so as to thwart the ambitions of former metaphysics. Hegel, as we have seen in the previous chapter, held that the understanding must abstract from the unity of contrary conceptual determinations in order to achieve empirical knowledge at all. This abstraction also occurred, in his view, when philosophy began to determine the absolute principle of reality as such. The *Logic* can be considered to repeat both this initial abstraction and its overcoming. I would suggest, however, that Hegel could not have reconstructed the essential moments of the history of thought without abstracting from the initial entanglement of contrary determinations. This might be considered a mode of abstraction that speculative science itself was unable to recognize as such, let alone to overcome.

### 3. The Concept of Infinity

As was argued in Chapter 3.6, Hegel considers a number of concepts treated in the *Doctrine of Being* to testify to the self-determining activity proper to the concept as such. Among them is the concept of infinity (L I, 149/137). He considers his extensive treatment of this concept to exemplify the speculative method as such:

This detailed example reveals that the nature of speculative thought... consists solely in grasping the opposed moments in their unity. Insofar as each moment actually shows that it contains its opposite within itself and that in this opposite it is united with itself,

the affirmative truth is this immanently active unity, the gathering together of both thoughts, their infinity.<sup>8</sup>

In order to expose the 'truth' of the concept of infinity, Hegel distinguishes between a non-speculative concept of infinity – called spurious infinity – and true infinity (149/137). Insofar as philosophy lets itself be governed by the understanding, it erroneously treats infinity and finitude in the same way as it treats concepts such as red and not-red, that is, as concepts which can be predicated of something apart from their opposite.<sup>9</sup> Whenever philosophy relies on oppositions such as those between idea and fact, God and world, or pure self-consciousness and empirical consciousness, it assumes that the infinite is limited by something outside itself and, hence, is itself something finite (152/140). Philosophy thus 'forgets' that infinity and finitude are nothing but contrary moments of the concept of infinity as such. As long as these moments are conceived as determinations which exclude – or, as Hegel puts it, repel – their contrary (153/140), their 'unity is concealed in their qualitative otherness' (154/141). The understanding thus finds itself entangled 'in the unresolved, absolute contradiction' (152/139) between the principle of pure thought that inheres in all philosophy, that is, the concept as such, and its actual positing of conceptual oppositions.

Hegel, in sum, regards the concept of infinity such as it has been determined by the understanding as the 'external realization of the concept' in which both of its contrary determinations are posited as 'falling asunder' (156/143). This may remind us of the way in which Antigone and Creon, identifying with one moment of the ethical substance, posited the opposition between archaic and rational justice. Viewed from Hegel's perspective, however, the opposition between the infinite and the finite is not as absolute as it seems. For when the understanding defines the finite as the negation of the infinite, it presupposes in fact, Hegel notes, that the determination 'finite' is inherent in the determination 'infinite' itself (157/143). In the same way, the determination 'infinite' can be said to inhere in the determination 'finite'. This is to say that the infinite and the finite consist from the outset in the unity of both contrary moments, albeit that each of them can initially actualize only one of them:

[T]he infinite and the finite, considered with respect to their mutual relation – which is supposed to be external to them, but which is in fact essential to them... – each contain their contrary in their own determination, just as much as each, when considered in itself, ... harbors its contrary as its own moment.<sup>10</sup>

This passage suggests that the relation between infinity and finitude is as symmetrical as the relationship between Antigone and Creon. Hegel immediately adds, however, that the unity of both moments is a 'unity that is itself the infinite which comprises itself and finitude' (158/144). According to Hegel, the infinite and the finite each consist in the unity of both contrary determinations. This unity can only actualize itself by first letting both sides gain a certain independence and subsequently letting them resolve this purported independence.<sup>11</sup> To the extent that both conceptual determinations enact this movement, they can both be said to enact the negation of the negation.<sup>12</sup> Whereas a conceptual determination opposes its contrary moment by means of the first negation, it establishes the synthesis of itself and its contrary by means of the second.

This raises the question as to whether the infinite and the finite resolve their purported independence in the same way, in other words, whether Hegel considers their relation to be asymmetrical or symmetrical. Since he tends to focus on the movement in which the infinite relinquishes, so to speak, its spurious independence and to pass over the movement in which the finite, for its part, does the same, this question is hard to answer. The following passage, echoing Hegel's remarks on the *Antigone*, seems to affirm their symmetry:

[E]ach is in itself this unity, and this only as the sublation of itself, a sublation in which neither would have precedence over the other [*einen Vorzug hätte*]... as regards its being-in-itself and its affirmative existence. (160/145)

As we have seen, the *Phenomenology* maintains with regard to Antigone and Creon that

neither power has any advantage over the other [*hat etwas vor der andern voraus*] that would make it a more essential moment of the substance.<sup>13</sup>

On closer inspection, however, it turns out that Hegel here expresses the way in which *the understanding* conceives of the relation between the infinite and the finite.<sup>14</sup> According to a corresponding section of the *Encyclopedia*, the understanding assigns 'an equal dignity of permanence and independence... to the finite and the infinite' (Enc I, § 95, rem.). By attributing the same kind of independence to the finite and the infinite,

the understanding can grasp their unity only in terms of their constant alternation, that is, as infinite progress. As long as this is the case, these contrary determinations are not yet posited 'in their ultimate truth' (L I, 161/146).

If Hegel is to overcome this idea of infinite progress, then he, in my view, cannot but conceive of the movement in which the infinite and the finite resolve their one-sidedness as an *asymmetrical* process. The following passage makes it clear that it does not mean the same for the infinite and the finite to bring about the 'unity of the infinite':

[T]he unity of the infinite, which each of these moments itself is, is *differently determined in each of them*. To that which is determined as infinite belongs the finitude that is distinguished from it; whereas the infinite is this unity in itself, the finite is merely the determinateness or limit belonging to it.<sup>15</sup>

Here I take Hegel to be arguing that the concept of infinity contains its contrary moments in such a way that 'infinity' pertains to that which it is in itself and 'the finite' to its actual determination. Only insofar as the infinite reduces itself to that which is opposed to the finite does it become a one-sided moment that subsequently must give up its purported independence. Conceived as the unity of its contrary determinations, by contrast, the concept of infinity allows philosophy to comprehend, for instance, self-consciousness as that which is essentially infinite and actualizes itself by distinguishing empirical consciousness from itself so as to let the latter achieve knowledge of appearances. It goes without saying that this finite determination of self-consciousness is subordinated to the movement in which it affirms itself as the unity of its contrary determinations.

This example makes it clear that the way in which the infinite and the finite resolve the purported independence of their one-sided determinations is anything but symmetrical. For if true infinity achieves the synthesis of its contrary determinations by incorporating the moment of finitude into itself, *then the finite cannot simultaneously achieve the synthesis of its contrary determinations by incorporating the moment of infinity into itself*. That is why Hegel argues that the finite, which in itself consists in the unity of the finite and the infinite, can only reach its true destiny by recognizing the infinite as its proper essence and by submitting itself to the movement in which this essence actualizes itself. The infinite, for its part, must recognize the finite as the moment of determinacy on which it depends to actualize itself, but it does not have to



let itself be determined by the finite. Thus, Hegel can define the infinite as the movement,

in which it reduces itself so as to be merely *one* of its determinations, a determination opposed to the finite, and then raises this its self-differentiation into the affirmation of itself, thus enacting itself, by means of this mediation, as the true infinite. (163/148)

The movement in which the infinite reduces itself to one of its contrary determinations actually occurs whenever philosophy lets itself be governed by the understanding. The infinite thus presents itself as spurious infinity. True infinity, by contrast, pertains to that which something is in itself, that is, to its essence. Contrary to Kant, however, Hegel conceives of this 'in-itself' not as abstract identity, but rather as the movement in which it negates and reaffirms its inner unity. The infinite can only do this if its contrary determinations – that is, the infinite insofar as it is opposed to the finite and the finite itself – overcome their purported independence *in different ways*. Whereas the infinite reduces the finite to a subordinate moment by means of which it can actualize itself, the finite reduces itself to precisely this subordinate moment.<sup>16</sup> Only the infinite, in other words, contains its contrary *in such a way* that it can both posit the latter over against itself and reduce it to a subordinate moment of itself. This is something that neither Creon nor Antigone could have achieved.

In sum, the movement enacted by the contrary determinations implied in the concept of infinity is *symmetrical* insofar as both must relinquish their spurious independence. It is *asymmetrical*, however, insofar as the infinite reaches its destiny by establishing itself as the synthetic unity of its contrary determinations, whereas the moment of finitude reaches its destiny by subordinating itself to the movement in which the infinite actualizes itself. In order to further investigate the relation between Hegel's conception of tragic conflicts and the principle of the speculative method, I will now consider two concepts that are, in my view, particularly relevant in this respect, namely, being-for-itself and contradiction.

#### 4. The Concept of Being-for-Itself

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the concept of something implies that 'something' cannot appropriate the 'other' to which it

relates. The concept of being-for-itself – also treated in the *Doctrine of Being* – negates the independence of its contrary moments to a much larger extent. According to Hegel, this concept has emerged in the history of philosophy in various ways, for example as the principle of atomism, as monad, or as ego.<sup>17</sup> He argues, however, that these modes of being-for-itself efface rather than reveal the true meaning of the concept of being-for-itself, thus implicitly distinguishing between a ‘spurious’ and a ‘true’ mode of being-for-itself. Whereas the former meaning of being-for-itself consists in repelling its contrary, the latter consists in incorporating its contrary as one of its proper moments. This distinction is, in my view, obliquely expressed in the following passage:

[W]e say that something is for itself insofar as it annuls [*aufhebt*] otherness, that is, annuls its relation to and community with other things; it has repelled this relation and community and made abstraction from them. In that which is for itself, the other only occurs *as* sublated, as its *moment*; being-for-itself consists in having so transcended . . . its otherness, that it is, as this negation, the infinite *return* into itself. (L I, 175/158)

The concept of being-for-itself expresses that something is not determined by something outside itself and so possesses a certain independence. This can be said of sensible objects, atoms, and consciousness alike, for the concept of being-for-itself constitutes the a priori structure that allows thought to determine something as independent at all. According to the conception of independence that has prevailed in the history of philosophy, the concept of being-for-itself refers to a unity that has *annulled* its relation to its contrary. This is the case when reality is interpreted in terms of, for instance, atoms or monads. In Hegel’s view, however, the concept of being-for-itself rather refers to the movement in which something gains independence by *incorporating* its contrary into itself.<sup>18</sup> Only if considered in this way is the concept of being-for-itself appropriate to determine human consciousness. For when we say that consciousness is ‘for itself’, we imply not so much that it is opposed to its object as that it has appropriated the latter:

[I]n its very intuiting and, in general, in its entanglement with the negative of itself [*in seiner Verwicklung mit dem Negativen seiner*], with the other, consciousness is at one with itself [*bei sich selbst*]. (175/158)

It is no coincidence, I think, that Hegel here employs the term 'entanglement' not with regard to the concept of being-for-itself as such, but with regard to one of its possible applications. This concept makes it possible to comprehend consciousness as a form of self-determining activity, that is, as a way of achieving independence. For by apprehending its object, consciousness turns it into a moment of its own being.

Hegel seems to regard this appropriation as originating in the initial entanglement of consciousness and its object. This might be explained as follows. Initially, the difference between a perceiving consciousness and a perceived object has not yet been established.<sup>19</sup> The impression of, for instance, something red is all there is. Consciousness becomes for itself by distinguishing itself from that which it perceives. In one single movement, it thus constitutes itself as consciousness and that which it perceives as object. Thus externalizing its contrary, consciousness disentangles its 'being-for-itself' from its 'being-for-one' so as to establish their opposition. Whereas consciousness relates at once to itself and the impression of red, the latter obviously lacks this capacity to relate to itself.

The passage quoted above suggests that consciousness negates not so much the initial unity of its contrary moments as their initial entanglement. Consciousness does this in such a way, however, that the first negation yields an opposition that lets itself be negated in turn. This second negation occurs as the movement in which consciousness incorporates the perceived content into itself. Only by thus 'returning' into itself can consciousness truly constitute itself as consciousness. The movement in which consciousness becomes for itself is finite, however, in that even consciousness is incapable of completely annulling the independence of its object:

[A]long with this return of consciousness into itself and the ideality of the object, the *reality* of the object is *also* still preserved, in that it is *at the same time* known as an external existence. (175/158)

It is, in my view, precisely because of the finite character of the being-for-itself proper to consciousness that Hegel here refers to its entanglement with its contrary. Finite consciousness, dependent as it is on empirical contents, is incapable of achieving complete self-dependence. Only insofar as it enacts itself as self-consciousness does it attain a mode of being-for-itself that resolves the opposition between being-for-itself and being-for-one. For here the moment of consciousness that occurs

as object is none other than the moment of consciousness that occurs as subject (178/160). Apparently, the contrary moments of the pure concept of being-for-itself as such – that is, ‘being-for-itself’ and ‘being-for-one’ – need not disentangle themselves from one another. The element of pure thought has from the outset transformed this entanglement into a synthetic unity that actualizes itself without reserve. Within the element of pure thought, the initial entanglement of contrary determinations has barely left any traces and never really becomes ‘for us’, let alone ‘for itself’. It disappears, as it were, behind the back of pure thought so as to allow the latter to unfold the totality of its immanent determinations.

## 5. The Concept of Contradiction

It might be argued that Antigone and Creon meet their fate because the element of natural ethical life does not allow them to achieve an appropriate mode of being-for-itself, that is, a mode of independence capable of incorporating its counterpart into itself. To the extent that both protagonists hold their determination of justice to obtain absolutely, each of these determinations can be said to contradict their inner unity. As we saw in the previous chapter, the *Logic* regards contradiction to pertain to an essential moment of the movement which establishes the synthetic unity of contrary determinations.<sup>20</sup> It is therefore not surprising that Hegel’s discussion of the concept of contradiction in the *Doctrine of Essence* echoes his earlier reading of the *Antigone*. Indeed, it seems to me that Hegel’s remarks on ‘contradiction’ hardly make sense without taking into account this subtext.

As always, Hegel distinguishes between two ways in which a contradiction can be dissolved. If the contradiction is conceived in the manner of the understanding, its dissolution merely yields the mutual annulment of both positions. This is the case when, for instance, Kant concludes that the world as such is neither finite nor infinite. If, on the other hand, the contradiction is conceived in a speculative way, this dissolution only concerns the purported comprehensiveness of both counterparts, thus yielding the insight into their identity (L II, 67/433). Hegel describes the movement performed by both sides of the contradiction as follows. In a first movement, two contrary determinations establish their own – abstract – identity by distinguishing themselves from their contrary. Both contrary moments now are what they are by dint of their mutual relation. This result can be compared, I think, to the mode of Greek culture defined by the mutual dependence of archaic

and rational justice. In order to posit their complete self-dependence, both contrary moments enact a second movement, which Hegel calls 'excluding reflection' (66/432). By attempting to exclude their contrary completely, they transform their relation into a merely negative one. This second result seems to correspond to the clash between the determinations of justice represented by Antigone and Creon. However, precisely at this point it emerges, in Hegel's view, that neither of them is able to maintain its spurious independence:

*They destroy themselves* in that they determine themselves as self-identical, but in doing so they rather determine themselves as the negative, that is, as something that is identical to itself only by being related to something else. (67/433)

The excluding reflection performed by both sides reveals that they are posited by something else at the very moment they seek to posit their being-for-itself. Thus, their mutual dependence re-emerges precisely when they seek to establish their absolute self-dependence.

In the same way, it is only by dint of the conflict between Antigone and Creon that their respective determinations of justice can emerge as one-sided determinations of justice as such. The excluding reflection proper to contradiction, Hegel notes,

reduces its initially self-subsistent determinations... to the status of mere *determinations*, and the positedness, being thus made into a positedness, has simply returned into its unity with itself... Through the sublation of its inherently self-contradictory determinations, essence has been restored. (68/434)

Hegel's account of the concept of contradiction reveals that one-sided, contrary determinations must yield to their inner unity. Insofar as the concept of contradiction itself is none other than a one-sided determination of the concept as such, this insight applies to the concept of contradiction as well (79/443). Qua finite concept, the concept of contradiction meets its fate by being reduced to a determination of the concept of ground (68/434). The latter is distinguished from the concept of contradiction in that it no longer lets the opposition of its contrary moments prevail. The ontological perspective opened up by the concept of ground regards the contrary moments of the concept no longer as positing one another, but as being posited by their common ground.

Thus, Hegel maintains that everything that enacts the negation of the negation, whether it is a thing, a subject, or a concept,

is inherently self-contradictory, but it is no less the *contradiction resolved*: it is the *ground* that contains and supports its determinations. (79/442)

The conflict between Antigone and Creon makes it clear, in Hegel's view, that justice can actualize itself only by dint of this conflict, even though it cannot actually do this within the bounds of natural ethical life. Accordingly, he regards the contradiction inherent in contrary *conceptual* determinations – that is, the impossibility to maintain their self-dependence – as the force that impels a concept to establish the unity of its contrary determinations. As I see it, Hegel thus incorporated Kant's insight into the necessary conflict between contrary conceptual determinations into the very principle of the *Logic*. He could do this, however, only by dint of reducing the symmetry of contrary determinations foregrounded by Kant to the merely negative side of the self-determining activity proper to the concept as such.

## 6. Recognition

Above I have used the term 'recognition' with regard to the way in which infinity and finitude overcome their spurious independence. In this section I briefly examine Hegel's use of this term in the context of the *Logic* to further clarify the partial analogy between his account of the self-actualization of pure concepts and of the unfolding of tragic conflicts.

One of the sections in which Hegel uses the term 'recognition' is the section in the *Doctrine of Being* devoted to the concept 'the one'. These remarks, however, pertain to all pure concepts in which a moment of identity and a moment of difference can be distinguished. Hegel notes that the moment of unity in the form of 'the one' stubbornly clings to its abstract identity instead of recognizing its dependence on its contrary. The nature of this abstract independence becomes manifest above all, he notes, when philosophy uses this concept to determine human life in terms of pure ego. This independence

is the supreme, most stubborn error, which takes itself for the highest truth, manifesting itself more concretely as abstract freedom, pure

ego, and, further, as evil. More specifically, this independence is the error of regarding as negative that which is its own essence.... Thus it is the negative attitude toward itself which, in seeking to possess its own being, destroys it, and this its act only manifests the nullity of this act. The reconciliation is the recognition [*Anerkennung*] that the object of this negative attitude is rather its own essence. (L I, 192–93/172)

The understanding tends to oppose ‘the one’ to ‘the many’, thus isolating the former from the unity that constitutes its true essence. Whereas the understanding would regard ‘the many’ as an external threat to the purported independence, freedom, and purity of ‘the one’, the *Logic* considers ‘the many’ rather to constitute the condition of its *true* independence, freedom and purity. Seen from this perspective, self-consciousness, for example, emerges as a form of ‘the one’ that establishes its true independence by recognizing empirical consciousness as its proper moment. If this moment were to retain its independence, the unity of self-consciousness would always be threatened by its contrary, that is, by the element on which its self-actualization depends.

As I argued in the first chapter, the *Phenomenology* emphasizes the symmetry of contrary determinations only when referring to the tragic destinies of Antigone and Creon. Both must perish because they fail to recognize the relative truth of the law they came to embrace and the one they came to oppose. It is perhaps no coincidence that Hegel presents Antigone and Creon as self-conscious human beings which, as such, do not let themselves be subordinated to the other’s self-actualization. For Hegel, it seems to me, a symmetrical mode of recognition can only be attained – if at all – within the finite element of intersubjectivity. Yet precisely because this element implies an irreducible otherness, it imposes severe limits on the way in which the concept as such, within this element, can establish the synthesis of its contrary determinations.

Whereas the *Phenomenology* accounts for the possibility of a symmetrical mode of recognition within the realm of intersubjectivity, the *Logic*, I have argued, conceives of the relation between contrary conceptual determinations as symmetrical only insofar as both are forced to recognize their one-sidedness. Thus, once the contrary moments implied in the concept of infinity are considered from a speculative point of view, they must recognize their mutual dependence, that is, their one-sidedness. Yet this mutual recognition by no means entails the symmetry of their destinies. The element of pure thought is precisely the

element wherein only one of them – infinity – can establish itself as the true essence of the infinite and the finite.

Now it might be objected that the example of the concept of infinity on which I have drawn is misleading in that it is taken from the *Doctrine of Being*. The sequence of concepts developed in the *Logic* might be held to reflect the increasing capacity of pure concepts to overcome the asymmetry of their contrary determinations. I do not think, however, that this is the case. I hold, by contrast, that the more the *Logic* advances, the more it treats of concepts that annul the apparent symmetry between their contrary determinations. As we saw above, Hegel considers his treatment of the concept 'infinity' to reveal the true nature of his speculative method. This nature remains concealed as long as it is used to dissolve the purported independence of abstract concepts such as 'being' and 'nothing', which do not even get to the point of opposing their contrary. It is only when Hegel turns to the concept of infinity that the relation between its contrary determinations turns out to be asymmetrical.

I argued with regard to the *Doctrine of Essence* that Hegel considers the concept of ground to exhibit the asymmetry of its contrary determinations to a larger extent than the concept of contradiction. This is even more so in the case of the concepts treated in the *Doctrine of the Concept*. Thus, the concept of teleology – which will be examined in Chapter 8 – has largely resolved the spurious independence of its contrary moments. Clearly, the relation between end and means is anything but symmetrical. This also holds true, in my view, of the absolute idea, that is, the mode of the concept that recognizes the totality of pure concepts evolved in the history of thought as its proper determinations.

As I see it, in sum, Hegel considers the element of pure thought to differ from the element of ethical life in that it cannot thwart the dialectical resolution of the conflict between contrary moments. I have argued that the *Logic* determines the sequence of the pure concepts by considering the extent to which they have already in the history of philosophy itself subordinated the apparent symmetry of their contrary determinations to the movement in which one of them establishes itself as the true principle of both. A concept such as the infinite can do this only if it has from the outset disentangled itself from its contrary. Rather than recognizing its contrary as equal to itself, it must from the outset contain the finite *in such a way* that it can subsequently reduce it to a moment of its self-actualization.

It is only by assuming this initial asymmetry of contrary determinations, I have argued, that Hegel could reconstruct the totality of pure



concepts in a systematic way. For only if the attempt of conceptual determinations to actualize themselves results in their synthesis, that is, in a less one-sided concept, can the latter set out, in its turn, to establish the synthesis of its contrary determinations to a larger extent. Thus, the sequence of the concepts treated in the *Logic* increasingly exhibits the capacity of these concepts to overcome the tragic conflict between their contrary determinations, that is, the sway of absolute negativity. This by no means entails, however, that the *Logic* has once and for all determined how philosophy is to interpret the dynamic at work in conceptual oppositions.

## 7. Tragedy and Modernity

Hegel, as we have seen, considered the conceptual oppositions treated in the *Doctrine of Essence* to define the perspective constitutive of modern philosophy. Since philosophy draws on the same premises as the culture from which it emerged, a critical reflection on modern philosophy must concern the prevailing self-understanding of modernity as well.<sup>21</sup> The section of the *Phenomenology* devoted to the Enlightenment contains such a reflection. In what follows I argue that Hegel conceived of the modern clash between pure insight and faith, which he took to divide his own age, along the same lines as he conceived of tragic conflicts.

The *Phenomenology* refers to the mode of thought that opposes itself to faith as pure insight – rather than reason – in order to emphasize its lack of content (Phen 357/329). Adopting self-consciousness as its absolute principle, pure insight defines its contrary as ‘a web of superstition, prejudices, and errors’ (357/330). It thus opposes a mode of thought which, seen from a speculative point of view, constitutes one of its proper moments. Insofar as pure insight opposes this moment, it turns itself into an equally one-sided determination. This yields the contradiction between that which this insight is in itself (the unity of its contrary determinations) and the one-sided moment it actually has become:

It entangles itself in this contradiction by engaging in a fight and by assuming that it fights something other than itself. . . . What pure insight thus pronounces to be its other, what it denounces as error or lie, can be nothing else but itself.<sup>22</sup>

This struggle can only come to an end, according to Hegel, if pure insight recognizes the content to which it opposed itself as its own

(361/333). It must recognize, in other words, that faith as much as itself constitutes modes of thought as such. While discussing the complementary ways in which pure insight and faith *define* their essence, Hegel draws explicitly on his account of the *Antigone* and *The Eumenides*:

Faith has the divine right...as against Enlightenment, and suffers wrong at its hands indeed....But the Enlightenment has only a human right as against faith....Since the right of the Enlightenment is the right of self-consciousness, however, it will not only *also* retain its own right, so that two equal rights of spirit would remain opposed to one another,...but it will maintain the absolute right, because self-consciousness constitutes the negativity of the concept, a negativity which...encompasses its contrary. And faith itself...will not be able to deny the Enlightenment its right. (372/343–44)

Just like Creon's right to oppose Antigone, the right of pure insight to oppose the realm of faith is a merely 'human' right. According to Hegel's speculative method, both moments contain their contrary within themselves. Since, however, the conflict between pure insight and faith concerns essential moments of thought rather than self-conscious human beings, Hegel can conceive of the relation between these contrary moments as asymmetrical. Only pure insight, Hegel suggests, contains its contrary *in such a way* that it can incorporate its contrary moment within itself. Insofar as it does this, it establishes itself as a concrete, self-conscious form of rationality. Faith, on the other hand, can maintain its 'divine right' only by affirming this mode of pure insight as its absolute principle. Modern reason, in other words, should stop fighting religion and profit instead from its capacity to provide a community with concrete moral guidelines. Religion, on the other hand, should be satisfied with its subordinate role in modern culture and not interfere with state affairs.<sup>23</sup>

Hegel would admit that this dialectical reconciliation of reason and faith does not correspond to the then current self-understanding of the Enlightenment. In this respect, he was one of the most profound critics of modernity such as it was known to him. It might be argued that he employed his conception of tragic conflicts, derived from the prevailing self-understanding of Greek culture, to let modernity become aware of its incapacity to reconcile its contrary moments. This does not entail, however, that Hegel therefore opposed modernity in all respects. Assuming that the conflict between contrary moments such as pure insight and

faith must give way to its resolution, he can be said to have adhered to the optimism constitutive of modernity as such.

Since he regarded this resolution as the necessary outcome of *any* essential conflict, he could not sufficiently recognize, in my view, the persistence of conflicts between contrary determinations such as reason and faith, progress and tradition, the individual and the community, or justice and power. Hegel's speculative science allows us to comprehend the mutual dependence of such contrary moments and, hence, the untenability of their opposition. Yet the tragic nature of their struggle can only be grasped, I hold, by abandoning the view that one of them, in the end, possesses an 'absolute right' over the other. Contrary determinations should rather be conceived as containing their contrary *in such a way* that they may not succeed in subordinating its proper force to their self-actualization. What is at stake in their struggle, on this account, is precisely their absolute right to incorporate one's contrary into oneself.

Turning away from the entanglement of contrary determinations addressed in the *Essay on Natural Law*, Hegel raised the dialectical strand of his insight into tragic conflicts to the principle of his philosophy as such. But if this is the case, then it should also be possible to unwind the tragic strand of this insight out of his early account of natural ethical life. By unfolding this strand into a logic of its own, it should be possible to interpret conceptual oppositions, wherever they emerge, as symmetrical rather than asymmetrical. According to this logic – the logic of entanglement – conflicts between contrary determinations do not necessarily yield their synthesis. Although, in my view, the limits of Hegel's dialectical perspective are borne out primarily by his conception of world history, this perspective no less defines the threefold system from which it stems. The next chapter begins to consider this system by examining the intricate relation between the *Logic* and the philosophies of nature and spirit.

# 5

## Time and Circularity

### 1. Introduction

In a well-known passage from the *Logic* Hegel seeks to elucidate the structure of his speculative system by comparing the logical self-unfolding of the concept with God's thought before he created the world.<sup>1</sup> Hegel here draws on a religious representation without clarifying the relation between the conceptual sphere and the spatio-temporal sphere in purely philosophical terms. From the later Schelling onward, passages such as these have occasioned a theological reading of Hegel which I consider to be quite misguided.<sup>2</sup> This also holds true for the charges of mysticism which have been levelled against Hegel ever since. In line with the interpretation of the *Logic* presented in Chapter 2, this chapter seeks to dismiss such criticisms by clarifying Hegel's conception of his threefold system on its own terms. I will do this by arguing that his comparison pertains, first, to the actualization of pure thought in the history of human culture and, second, to the reconstruction of this actualization achieved in the *Logic* itself. Thus, the current chapter resolves the one-sidedness of the preceding chapters by addressing Hegel's account of the concept's actualization in the element of spatio-temporal externality. In accordance with the threefold articulation of the *Encyclopedia*, it functions as the hinge between the chapters on the *Logic* and the chapters devoted to Hegel's philosophies of nature and spirit.

In what follows I first consider how Hegel, in his early engagement with Schelling, begins to conceive of a threefold speculative system. Turning to the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*, I then interpret a number of passages from these texts which, as I hope to show, reflect not so much on the actualization of the concept in nature and spirit itself as on

the way in which the speculative system reconstructs this actualization. On my account, the apparent linearity of the *Phenomenology* and the three parts of Hegel's mature system presupposes – and sometimes conceals – the 'circle of circles' (L II, 571–72/842) enacted by the concept in the element of speculative science itself. Although this aspect of Hegel's method has so far remained in the background, my interpretation of it is in agreement with my reading – in Chapter 3 – of those passages in the *Logic* that reflect on the relation between the conceptual spheres of being, essence, and the concept.

After examining what I take to be Hegel's reflections on the circular nature of his own method, I interpret his conception of time as a radicalization of Kant's transcendental account of time. I try to demonstrate, moreover, that Hegel conceives of time as the ultimate condition of possibility of the concept's externalization in the realms of nature and spirit. This is far from evident, since Hegel treats space and time only in the philosophy of nature. Only the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* briefly refer to a 'metaphysics of time'. Hegel here maintains that time constitutes one of the forms by means of which spirit externalizes itself, forms that should be further investigated in both the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of finite spirit (LHP I, 51/32). It seems hardly convincing, however, that a metaphysical account of time might have been developed within this context alone. Since an account of time limited to the spheres of either nature or spirit presupposes a more general conception of time, one would rather expect such an account to fall within Hegel's *Science of Logic*. The *Logic*, however, cannot elaborate on the forms of space and time because it exclusively pertains to the totality of pure concepts.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the threefold speculative system, consisting of a logic, a philosophy of nature and a philosophy of spirit, does not seem to leave room for a metaphysical account of time at all.

If time constitutes the condition of possibility of the concept's actualization in the realms of nature and spirit, then philosophy cannot refrain from reflecting on the movement that yields the difference between concept and time, a difference that precedes the actual beginning of the *Logic*. It is precisely this difference, I will argue, that allows Hegel to regard the essential moments of nature and spirit as resulting from the concept's increasing liberation from the abstract negativity constitutive of the realm of externality as such. Rather than reproaching Hegel with being tangled up in theology, this chapter challenges his assumption that the concept can completely disentangle itself from a negativity which it regards as merely external.

## 2. Hegel and Schelling

Hegel, as we have seen, maintains in his *Differenzschrift* that philosophy reaches the highest degree of satisfaction by resolving rigidified oppositions.<sup>4</sup> As I argued in Chapter 2, he seeks to achieve this satisfaction primarily by no longer comprehending the ego, but the concept as such as the source of pure concepts. This concept is nothing but the principle of self-determination that precedes the distinction between subject and object.<sup>5</sup> Yet Hegel could not have overcome the limits of transcendental philosophy without drawing on Schelling's early philosophy of nature. According to Hegel, Schelling's insight into the absolute identity of nature and consciousness calls for a systematic reconstruction of the movement in which this identity unfolds the totality of its determinations. He does not explain, however, why Schelling's twofold philosophical system should be ill-suited to perform this task. In order to clarify how Hegel in his Jena period (1801–1807) begins to abandon Schelling's conception of philosophy I will examine some of Schelling's early texts and Hegel's comments on Schelling in his *Differenzschrift*.

In his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), Schelling aims to comprehend the identity of subject and object by conceiving of nature not merely as a totality of objects determined by the subject, but as manifesting the absolute principle of self-determination. On this view, nature constitutes a particular mode of what he, adopting a Fichtean expression, calls the subject-object. Whereas Kant reduced the concept of teleology to a necessary presupposition of subjective thought (cf. D 103/163), Schelling conceives of nature as the 'non-conscious production' of unity in the spatio-temporal manifold (STI 111–12/170). His philosophy of nature reconstructs the development of this unity in the element of externality, a development that results in the emergence of human consciousness.<sup>6</sup> At this point – which constitutes the final moment of the philosophy of nature – the absolute principle of self-determination begins to enact itself as the subjective principle which opens consciousness onto the world. Consciousness, thus repeating the self-construction of nature, henceforth produces the concepts that allow it to achieve knowledge of nature as it is in itself. Hegel summarizes this view as follows:

When science . . . has divided itself into two parts, assigning the non-conscious production to one side and the conscious production to the other, it knows at the same time that intelligence . . . takes along the whole self-construction of nature to the other side and that it

contains within itself all that preceded it or stands beside it; and it knows, too, that what is set against nature... in science is immanent in nature as well.<sup>7</sup>

In line with Kant, Schelling maintained that the concepts which constitute the subjective conditions of experience possess a subjective and an objective side. Yet he turned against Kant by claiming that these concepts have the same content as the essential moments of nature itself. This by no means implies, however, that he therefore adhered to a pre-critical account of nature. For, as he put it in 1797,

The question is not whether and how the assemblage of phenomena and the series of causes and effects, which we call the course of nature, has become actual *outside* us, but how they have become actual *for* us...and how they have attained the necessity in our conception with which we are absolutely compelled to think of them.<sup>8</sup>

Whereas Schelling's philosophy of nature reconstructs the necessary unfolding of the objective subject-object into the subject, his transcendental philosophy reconstructs the way in which the subjective subject-object constitutes nature as a comprehensive object.<sup>9</sup> Thus, both complementary perspectives abstract from the content elaborated by the opposite perspective in order to reconstruct the essential moments of the idea of nature as such.

Insofar as Schelling based his philosophy of nature on a principle proper to nature itself, he initiated, according to Hegel, a truly scientific construction of nature (D 105/164). Hegel also endorses the view that the 'self-construction of identity into totality' (111/170) occurs on both the subjective and the objective side of the subject-object. Whereas the development of the objective subject-object results in consciousness, the development of the subjective subject-object results, as he puts it, in 'the intuition of the absolute which becomes its own object as completed totality' (112/171).

Apparently following Schelling, Hegel does not quite make it clear in which respect his view diverges from that of his friend and protector. Schelling had argued that the philosophy of nature and transcendental philosophy mutually presuppose one another (STI 9–12/5–7). According to Schelling, the proper exposition of these complementary sciences proves that they together constitute the philosophical system as a

whole. His philosophy has, therefore, no need for a science that comprehends their unity from an overarching perspective. Since Hegel's *Science of Logic* constitutes precisely such a perspective, it is not surprising that the later Schelling is most critical of the threefold division of the *Encyclopedia*. In the lectures he delivered in 1827 Schelling describes his own former philosophy of nature as follows:

It did not leave room for concepts that do not contain the real within themselves, for it was . . . in nature from its first steps onward. It advanced in nature, however, up until the point where the subject, having made its way through the whole of nature, comes into its own (the ego) and finds, admittedly, not so much the former moments left behind in nature itself, but the concepts of these moments *qua* concepts.<sup>10</sup>

Actually, concepts as such exist nowhere else than in consciousness; from an objective point of view, they therefore do not so much *precede* nature as *follow* on it. (HMP 210/145)

According to Schelling, philosophy can only investigate concepts that occur in human thought. Hegel would not disagree with Schelling on this point. He would maintain, however, that philosophy also needs to investigate such conceptual determinations of thought as do not pertain to nature or spirit in particular. Yet for Hegel this does not imply, as Schelling seems to believe, that these conceptual determinations have occurred anywhere else than in the actual history of human thought.

In any event, it was crucial for Schelling to maintain that the idea of nature is independent from its constitution in the realm of subjective thought. According to Schelling, philosophy of nature and transcendental philosophy balance one another out. Although both sides strive to overcome their initial one-sidedness, the unity of subject and object that each side achieves remains a relative one. The turning point between them, as Hegel observes, is a point of indifference that *does not develop into a totality of its own* (111/170). The two sciences distinguished by Schelling, in other words,

strive toward the point of indifference; as identity and as relative totality, this point lies within these sciences themselves, but as absolute totality it lies outside of them. (111/169–70)



This means for Hegel that Schelling ultimately failed to overcome the opposition between nature and spirit, an opposition which, in his view, concerns merely the *form* in which their determinations occur.<sup>11</sup> As he sees it, the opposition between nature and spirit can truly be overcome only by also reconstructing the totality of conceptual determinations *apart* from their actualization in the realms of nature and consciousness. These determinations, he holds, should also be reconstructed insofar as they unfold in the element of the concept as such (cf. 112/171). Since the part of speculative science devoted to this task concerns the unfolding of the concept in its purest element, it must precede the other parts.

At the end of the section of the *Differenzschrift* devoted to Schelling, Hegel seems to conceive of his speculative system, as yet to be developed, as follows. In one respect, he notes, the totality of possible knowledge falls within the sphere of transcendental philosophy. This sphere includes, first, 'the philosophy of nature qua knowledge' and, second, the 'science of knowledge' that concerns the element of consciousness (114/173). Hegel suggests, however, that speculative logic, conceiving of the totality of knowledge in a different way, constitutes the third part of transcendental philosophy. Only this latter science comprehends both nature and consciousness as different guises of 'absolute, self-intuiting reason' (115/174). By depriving philosophy of nature – as conceived by Schelling – of its primary position, Hegel can fill this vacant space with his speculative logic. Only a speculative system that begins with such a logic can, in his view, truly comprehend the movement in which the unity of subject and object unfolds the totality of its determinations.

Since Schelling's system is 'in nature from its first steps onward' (HMP 209–10/144), it need not clarify the transition from the logical into the real. Accordingly, in the lectures from 1827 mentioned above, Schelling does not conceal his disdain for the way in which Hegel at the end of the *Logic* conceives of the relation between the logical idea and nature:

The expression 'to release' – the idea releases nature [*die Idee entlässt die Natur*] – belongs to the most peculiar, ambiguous and therefore faint-hearted expressions, behind which this philosophy, at difficult moments, retreats.... Obviously, this explanation of nature can be honored at most by calling it theosophical.<sup>12</sup>

Since there is no way in which a mere concept could possibly resolve to do something, 'philosophy has here reached a bad point' (HMP

223–24/155). After Schelling, many others have taken offense at this passage.<sup>13</sup> It may well be, however, that Hegel's remark has a different bearing than Schelling assumes. For it is far from clear what it is that resolves itself here, and in favor of what.

### 3. A Circle of Circles: The Construction of the System

In his Jena period Hegel began to develop, on the one hand, his threefold system and, on the other, the science of knowledge insofar as it occurs in the realm of consciousness. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* reconstructs the essential moments of thought by letting consciousness develop from sense certainty into absolute knowing. Although these moments have marked the actual history of human culture, they have never been grasped as a totality. Since the realm of consciousness presupposes the opposition between consciousness and its objects, however, speculative science cannot limit its reconstruction of thought to this realm.<sup>14</sup>

Hegel realized, as we have seen, that he would also have to reconstruct the mode of thought that precedes the distinction between subject and object, that is, pure thought. In line with Kant, Hegel considers this mode of thought to have produced the totality of such concepts as underlie any knowledge of objects. Only when human beings become aware of themselves as rational does pure thought begin to become for itself. This its being-for-itself, occurs especially in philosophy and is completed when pure thought, qua absolute knowing, comprehends the totality of pure concepts as moments of its proper self-actualization, as actually happens in Hegel's threefold speculative system itself. It is, according to the *Logic*,

in the determinations of thought and the concept that [the object] *is* what it *is*. Therefore these determinations are in fact the sole thing that matters, they are the true object and content of reason, and anything that one understands by object and content in distinction from them has value only through them and in them. (L II, 560/833)

The reach of the *Logic* is limited, however, in that it does not include those concepts that define the essential moments of nature and spirit in a more concrete way. After having reconstructed its purely 'logical' history, absolute knowing must therefore unfold into a comprehensive system.<sup>15</sup> In what follows I hope to demonstrate that it does this by

reconstructing its proper genealogy from different perspectives, each of which takes the form of a particular cycle.<sup>16</sup>

Before turning to Hegel, however, I would like to contend that he borrowed the idea of such a circular reconstruction from Schelling. As a matter of fact, the later Schelling accused Hegel of having elaborated his logical science by means of a method, first developed by himself, that was never meant for this purpose (HMP 207/142). Reflecting on the nature of transcendental philosophy, Schelling's early *System of Transcendental Philosophy* refers to this method as follows:

So long as the ego is absorbed in the original evolution of the absolute synthesis, there is only one series of acts, namely, that of the original and necessary acts; as soon as I interrupt this evolution, *and freely project myself back to its starting-point*, there arises for me a new series, in which is free what was necessary in the first. (STI 66/49, my emphasis)

For Schelling, accordingly,

philosophy as such is...nothing but the free imitation, the free repetition of the original series of acts in which the one act of self-consciousness evolves...Enacting this free repetition, philosophical talent mainly consists in...becoming conscious again of the primordial necessity of these actions.<sup>17</sup>

Schelling's conception of philosophy as 'free repetition' of the modes of thought evolved in the history of thought is pivotal to Hegel's own method, as I hope to show in the remainder of this section.

The *Phenomenology of Spirit*, to begin with, can be said to freely repeat the essential history of absolute knowing by isolating its gradual unfolding in the element of consciousness. This element is defined by the distinction between consciousness and the object of consciousness. The reconstruction of the possible modes of consciousness achieved in the *Phenomenology* results in a mode of knowledge that has resolved the one-sidedness proper to this element. The *Phenomenology* thus concludes by opening up the element of pure thought, that is, the element within which the *Logic* as well as the philosophies of nature and spirit unfold.<sup>18</sup>

This is not to say, however, that Hegel regards the *Phenomenology* as the absolute beginning of speculative science. He maintains at the end of this work that it is itself already a result of pure science. Contrary

to the *Phenomenology*, this latter science completely disregards the distinction between the subjective and objective moment of knowledge (Phen 528–29/491). It would seem to me that Hegel here refers to the first drafts of his speculative logic which he elaborated between 1804 and 1806.<sup>19</sup> This science, consisting in the ‘organic self-grounded movement’ of determinate concepts (528/491), at some point reaches its proper limit. As Hegel puts it, pure science ‘contains the necessity to externalize itself so as to abandon the form of the pure concept’.<sup>20</sup> It does this primarily – at the beginning of the *Phenomenology* – by positing itself as sensible consciousness, that is, by identifying with the most simple form of subjective thought. While reconstructing its own history with regard to its subjective side, however, pure science never loses sight of its proper form, that is, of the concept as such:

This release of itself [*dieses Entlassen seiner*] from its proper form is the supreme freedom and certainty of its self-knowledge. (529/491)

Although this passage intimates God’s decision to create the world, I would contend that it exclusively pertains to pure science itself, that is, to a mode of self-comprehension that is attained in the history of human thought alone.<sup>21</sup> The finite modes of consciousness that constitute the content of the *Phenomenology* have never been free to develop their inherent determinations. Absolute knowing, on the other hand, has attained a mode of freedom that allows it to unfold the determinations of thought as such into a comprehensive system.

Contrary to the finite modes of thought constitutive of the history of human culture, absolute knowing, grasping their pure concept, achieves the annulment of time (524–25/487). This does not mean that actual history has somehow come to a halt, but rather – as I have argued in Chapter 3.2 – that Hegel’s *comprehension* of this history does not depend on the element of temporal externality. Absolute knowing focuses exclusively on the essential moments of this history. Accordingly, it does not offer a single linear account of its proper history, but proceeds, as Hegel remarks, by means of a ‘circle of circles’ (571–72/842).

Since absolute knowing is itself a mode of self-consciousness, it must reconstruct its proper genealogy by comprehending the modes of thought that have actually unfolded in the element of consciousness. In order to do this, it abstracts from its plenitude *so as to posit its poorest possible determination as the beginning of its proper unfolding*. Pure science, in other words, identifies with its poorest determination – its

first germ, as it were – and posits the latter as sense certainty, that is, as the most immediate and restricted way of being conscious of something. Seen from the perspective of speculative science, the principle that sense certainty has consciously adopted is at odds with the true principle of any mode of thought, namely, self-determination. The *Phenomenology* confronts sense certainty with this its implicit self-contradiction, thus impelling it from within to overcome its initial self-understanding. In this way, the *Phenomenology* stages the ‘self-abandonment’ of absolute knowing so as to let it reconstruct the essential moments of its actual history and, hence, to return to itself.

Yet absolute knowing, as I noted above, cannot be satisfied with reconstructing the modes of thought such as they have actually occurred in the finite element of consciousness. It will also have to reconstruct the unfolding of the essential moments of objectifying thought as such. This is the task of the *Logic*. As we have seen, Hegel in this work considers the beginning of the *Logic* to result from the movement in which consciousness develops into absolute knowing. He maintains, however, that its beginning should equally be regarded as an immediate beginning. It follows from ‘the resolve, which, since one is determined to consider *thought as such*, can also be regarded as arbitrary’, that the investigation should start with a concept that is not mediated by something else, that is, with the concept of being.<sup>22</sup> Evidently, this resolve itself precedes the actual beginning of the *Logic*. Just as the *Phenomenology* lets absolute knowing abandon itself to its poorest determination in the element of consciousness, the *Logic* lets absolute knowing abandon itself to its poorest determination in the element of pure thought. Absolute knowing distinguishes, in other words, the poorest mode of the concept – the concept of being – from the concept as such in order to let the former resolve its one-sidedness from within.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the *Logic* can be said to reconstruct the genealogy of absolute knowing – that is, the highest mode of the concept as such – by letting the concept oppose itself to the spheres of being and essence and, hence, resolve their one-sidedness.<sup>24</sup>

Yet in the end it does not matter, Hegel notes, whether or not the most immediate beginning presupposes something else, such as, for example, consciousness:

It is not so much essential to science that the beginning be a pure beginning, but rather that the whole of science be within itself a cycle in which the first is also the last and the last is also the first. (L I, 70/71)

The 'line of scientific advance' must accomplish a circle (71/72) 'that returns into itself, presupposing its beginning by positing it and reaching it only in the end'.<sup>25</sup> In my view, this circularity concerns the various ways in which absolute knowing reconstructs its proper genealogy. On this account, absolute knowing can only come full circle if its allegedly immediate beginning already *results from the movement in which absolute knowing distinguishes itself from itself*. Absolute knowing must abandon the most abstract determination of the pure concept – that is, being – to itself so as to let it repeat, now *within the element of pure thought*, the development that actually – in the history of thought – resulted in absolute knowing. Contrary to the historical development of absolute knowing, the reconstruction of this development in the element of pure thought is divested of historical contingency.<sup>26</sup>

To put it differently, in order for absolute knowing to comprehend its proper genealogy, it must create the greatest possible distance between itself and its most abstract determination. Since the concept of being is itself a mode of pure thought, it *suffers from the contradiction between that which it is in itself and its actual determination*. This suffering unleashes the force, as it were, that impels the concept to overcome its one-sidedness, a development that ultimately results in absolute knowing itself. Thus, once absolute knowing has posited the concept of being as beginning, it merely has to observe how the negativity proper to the concept as such drives its subsequent determinations to give up their one-sidedness.<sup>27</sup> This knowing itself therefore turns out to constitute the true beginning and end of each specific part of the system and of the system as a whole. The system can claim to be presuppositionless, I would like to suggest, precisely because it only presupposes the principle of absolute knowing itself.<sup>28</sup>

So far I have argued that absolute knowing, in order to comprehend its proper development, must accomplish two different cycles, cycles that pertain to its development in the elements of consciousness and pure thought. Whereas the first has a merely preparatory function, the second produces the first part of Hegel's speculative system, that is, the *Logic*. I now turn to the third cycle at stake in Hegel's system, namely, the one that concerns thought insofar as it is determined by externality. According to Hegel, the cycle accomplished in the *Logic* is limited insofar as absolute knowing here enacts itself as 'a science of the divine concept alone' (L II, 572/843). Absolute knowing will also have to comprehend the way in which this concept has unfolded in the element of externality, that is, in the realms of nature and spirit. In other words, it must accomplish an 'inner' and an 'outer' circle in order to develop

into a comprehensive philosophical system. Positing 'being' as its proper beginning, the inner circle concerns the development of pure thought in the element of pure thought itself (572/843). But what should absolute knowing posit as its poorest possible determination in order to accomplish its outer circle?

As we have seen, the end of the *Phenomenology* reflects on the way in which pure science reconstructs its proper development in the elements of both consciousness and pure thought. Whereas the former reconstruction occurs in the *Phenomenology* itself, the latter occurs in the *Logic*. Hegel here goes on to suggest that absolute knowing has to externalize itself to a far greater extent in order to unfold into a truly comprehensive system, namely, by exposing its proper development 'in the form of free and contingent processes' (Phen 529/492). This is not to say, however, that his philosophy is concerned with these contingent processes themselves. Hegel's philosophies of nature and spirit rather reconstruct the unfolding of the concept – that is, the principle of self-determination – such as it manifests itself *in* the element of spatio-temporal externality. In accordance with the early Schelling, Hegel is exclusively concerned with the essential moments of nature and spirit such as they 'have become actual for us'. Both Schelling and Hegel hold the view, however, that a philosophy of nature must abstract from the way these moments occur in the realm of subjective thought. Hegel does this, we have seen, by positing the concept as the principle of pure thought as such.

From 1804/05 onward, Hegel uses the term 'idea' to refer to the actualization of the concept in the elements of pure thought, nature, and spirit:

The idea is the ideality of the relations of the infinite, and nature merely occurs as the idea in itself....This is to say that philosophy considers the idea; not the idea of this or that, but rather determinateness insofar as it is necessary. (Jen II, 196)

The idea...is the absolute identity of the concept and objectivity. Its *ideal* content consists in none other than the determinations of the concept; its *real* content consists in its exposition in the form of external existence.<sup>29</sup>

Whereas Kant held that the ideas of the world, the soul, and God transcend any conceptual determination whatsoever, Hegel, as we have seen, comprehends these ideas precisely as the totality of their

conceptual determinations.<sup>30</sup> On his account, the idea of nature is nothing but the totality of such conceptual determinations as time, matter, organic nature, life, etcetera. Thus, the logical idea, the idea of nature and the idea of spirit taken together – the idea as such – constitute the exclusive content of speculative science as a whole. The *Phenomenology* refers to this science as absolute knowing. The *Logic*, abstracting from the subjective side of pure thought, refers to the mode of pure thought that comprehends the idea as such as absolute idea.<sup>31</sup>

Now Kant's *Critique* considers nature to be revealed to consciousness primarily by the pure intuitions of space and time. These intuitions underlie both our knowledge of nature and nature itself insofar as it can be known. Whereas Kant took great care to distinguish these forms from the conceptual order, Hegel maintains in the *Phenomenology* that absolute knowing 'intuits its pure self as the time outside itself, and likewise its proper being as space' (Phen 529/492). I take this to mean that absolute knowing is able to recognize the concept as such even in the forms of space and time, that is, even in the ultimate forms of externality as such.

On this basis the question raised above can be answered as follows. No less than Kant, Hegel holds that what we call 'nature' is relevant only insofar as it constitutes a possible object of knowledge.<sup>32</sup> Following Schelling, however, Hegel's philosophy of nature pertains not only to nature insofar as it is submitted to physical laws, but also to nature insofar as it testifies to the principle of self-determination. In order to reconstruct the development of this principle – the concept as such – in the element of spatio-temporal externality, absolute knowing abstracts from its actual plenitude by positing space and time as the poorest possible determinations of the concept as such and by identifying with these determinations. This its most radical self-externalization subsequently allows absolute knowing to reconstruct the unfolding of the concept into the essential moments of the ideas of nature and spirit. It can thus interpret the basic principles of the actual sciences as moments of this very unfolding.<sup>33</sup>

This reconstruction requires that absolute knowing creates the greatest possible distance between its beginning (the idea of nature insofar as it is completely determined by space and time) and its end (the complete overcoming of this determination). It is this distance that opens up the element within which the concept is impelled, little by little, to bridge the gap between what it is in itself and what it is for itself. When pure science has thus released its proper principle in the elements of nature and spirit – yet without leaving the element of thought – it returns once



again to itself as absolute knowing, which now emerges as the highest possible form of absolute spirit (530–31/493).

While religion can only conceive of God as a supreme being external to thought itself, absolute knowing comprehends the true content of this religious representation as the movement in which pure thought unfolds its immanent determinations, a movement that reaches its completion in absolute knowing itself (cf. 522–23/485). This development has occurred nowhere else than in the history of human thought. Whereas the inner circle reconstructs the development of our basic ontological concepts, the outer circle reconstructs the determinations of our knowledge of nature as well as of spirit's self-knowledge. This outer circle is addressed again at the end of the *Logic*, where Hegel, as was noted above, refers to absolute knowing as the absolute idea. However, Hegel here again seems hardly capable of elucidating this movement without relying on religious images. This obscures the fact, in my view, that the concluding pages of the *Logic* reflect as much as those of the *Phenomenology* on the way in which absolute knowing unfolds into a comprehensive philosophical system. I would contend, in other words, that the concluding pages of the *Logic* have the same content as those of the *Phenomenology*. Before turning to the end of the *Logic*, however, I would like to consider a passage from the *Logic* that concerns the relation between both works.

At the beginning of the *Doctrine of Being* Hegel points out that the movement in which absolute knowing posits itself as mere sense certainty presupposes the movement in which the concept as such, having actualized itself as absolute spirit, posits itself as mere being:

This is true to an even greater extent of absolute spirit, which, revealing itself as the concrete and final supreme truth of all being, is comprehended as that which at the *end* of the development freely externalizes itself, abandoning itself [*sich entlassend*] to the shape of *immediate* being [*eines unmittelbaren Seins*] – resolving itself [*sich entschiessend*] to create a world which contains all that fell into the development preceding that result.<sup>34</sup>

This passage makes it clear that Hegel considers the resolve of absolute knowing to externalize itself to occur only at the *end* of its historical development. Although this passage again refers to divine creation, it is, in my view, exclusively concerned with the resolve of absolute knowing to reconstruct the unfolding of pure thought which first opened consciousness onto the world (cf. L I, 68–69/70). Speaking in the tongue of

religion, Hegel attributes the capacity of thought to create 'a world' to pure thought itself. The world created by thought is not the actual universe, but the world such as it is disclosed by the ontological perspectives that have developed throughout the history of human thought. Thus, Hegel attributes to objectifying thought as such – which adequately comprehends itself only in speculative science itself – the properties traditionally attributed to God.

The final pages of the *Logic*, to conclude this section, are again devoted to the outer circle that absolute knowing must accomplish in order to reconstruct its proper development. Hegel, reflecting on the result of the *Logic* itself, here maintains that absolute knowing has bridged the gap between itself and the most immediate mode of the pure concept, namely, being, in the element of the concept as such. This result, he notes, must subsequently constitute 'the beginning of another sphere and science' (L II, 573/843). The concept as such must retrieve itself not only within the sphere of the concept itself, but also in the element determined by spatio-temporal externality.<sup>35</sup> This latter reconstruction requires that the absolute idea determine itself as 'mere objectivity and external life', that is, as the idea of nature. The freedom proper to this idea implies, however, that it can distinguish itself from itself without losing sight of itself. As Hegel puts it, this determination

remains perfectly transparent to it...The transition is therefore rather to be understood as the movement in which the idea, absolutely self-assured and self-contained, freely *releases itself* [*sich selbst frei entlässt*]....Thus having resolved to determine itself as external idea, the pure idea exposes itself to mediation, a mediation out of which the concept emerges as a free existence that, from out of externality, has come into its own.<sup>36</sup>

Contrary to Schelling and those who followed in his footsteps, I take Hegel here to reflect on the transition between his speculative logic and the philosophy of nature, a transition that occurs nowhere else than in speculative science itself. In order to reconstruct the ideas of nature and spirit, absolute knowing lets the poorest mode of the concept unfold in the element of the concept insofar as the latter is determined by the *form* of space and time. The 'form of its determination' here consists in 'the externality of space and time insofar as it exists absolutely in itself', that is, regardless of the transcendental determination of space and time as forms of intuition (573/843). This philosophy of nature, just like Schelling's, results in the mode of the concept that has attained a free existence, that is, in human consciousness. This latter mode of

the concept constitutes, in its turn, the beginning of the philosophy of spirit, ultimately resulting in the science of logic:

This concept completes its self-liberation *in the science of spirit*, and finds the supreme concept of itself in the science of logic as the self-comprehending pure concept. (573/844)

Thus returning once again to itself, absolute knowing establishes a system of philosophical sciences that constitutes the circle of circles mentioned above (571–72/842). In this concluding passage, Hegel explicitly refers to the various philosophical sciences rather than to nature and spirit themselves. These sciences are exclusively concerned with the essential determinations of nature and spirit, that is, with their ideas. According to Hegel, then, pure, objectifying thought creates the world as a comprehensive and comprehensible whole, and speculative science is the mode of pure thought that comprehends this creation itself by recreating it in the element of pure thought. What used to be attributed to God is now attributed to human thought itself, such that the latter is endowed with a power that philosophy has seldom dared to claim. Yet Hegel's references to the religious representation of divine creation suggest that the pure concept must have unfolded its essential determinations in nature before the emergence of human consciousness as well. This raises the question, to which I now turn, as to how Hegel understood the relation between speculative science and the world such as it can be known.

#### 4. The Logical Beginning of the World

Hegel's philosophies of nature and spirit, I argued above, reconstruct the unfolding of the concept in the element of pure thought insofar as this element is determined by spatio-temporal externality. This development yields the concepts that together constitute the essential determinations of the ideas of nature and spirit. As such, they provide the various sciences that treat these realms with their basic principles. The differences between the various parts of speculative science are exclusively due, in Hegel's view, to the particular nature of the element wherein the unfolding of the concept occurs. Thus, the logical forms of being, essence, and concept occur in the element of externality – insofar as it is constitutive of nature – as space and time, inorganic nature, and organic nature respectively (L II, 257/586). These determinations constitute the most general principles of the particular natural sciences. Likewise, spirit

can be comprehended speculatively by distinguishing its two immediate forms – sense certainty and absolute spirit – and, hence, the movement which bridges the gap between them.<sup>37</sup> Speculative science, I would contend, reconstructs only those aspects of the world that testify to the movement in which the concept as such actualizes itself. While nature and spirit themselves are also characterized by contingency and indifference, speculative science exclusively pertains to the movement in which the concept increasingly annuls the power of externality.<sup>38</sup> According to Hegel, it is precisely this movement that constitutes the ideas of nature and spirit, that is, the totality of their essential determinations.

As we have seen, the early Hegel adopted Schelling's view that consciousness repeats the initial self-construction of nature. Although Hegel in his later works no longer puts it this way, I believe that he remained faithful to this view. He seems to assume, at least, that the determinations of nature constituted by pure thought are identical to the determinations of nature such as they actually must have preceded the emergence of human consciousness. Contrary to Schelling, however, Hegel no longer regards the essential determinations of nature as absolutely prior to the emergence of the concept. He rather transforms these determinations 'into that which is dependent on the result qua principle', to use an expression from the *Logic* (L I, 70/71). Even though it must be assumed that the realms of nature and finite spirit actually precede the highest mode of spirit attained in philosophy, absolute knowing comprehends these realms only insofar as they are constituted by the concept as such. Only in the element of pure thought does this principle unfold into the totality of concepts that ultimately ground our knowledge of nature and spirit.<sup>39</sup> Although Hegel considers objectifying thought itself to repeat the unfolding of the concept that must have occurred in nature itself, his philosophy of nature cannot but take this latter 'repetition' as its starting point.

On this account, Hegel's philosophy of nature implicitly distinguishes between (1) the initial unfolding of the concept in the realm of nature itself, (2) the repetition of this unfolding in the history of thought, and (3) the free repetition of this latter unfolding in pure science.<sup>40</sup> Since Hegel considers the *difference* between these levels to consist merely in the nature of their element, he can identify the unfolding of the concept in nature itself with its unfolding into the principles of the natural sciences. However, we can only grasp the initial unfolding of the concept by taking recourse to these latter principles. And we can only comprehend this first repetition by repeating it, in turn, in the element of speculative science itself. As I see it, Hegel's philosophy of nature does not elaborate on the difference between these levels because it is, unlike

Schelling's, exclusively concerned with the essential determinations of the idea of nature as such.

So far I have argued that absolute knowing establishes itself as a comprehensive system by retrieving the totality of conceptual determinations evolved in the history of pure thought. Hegel, as we have seen, repeatedly draws on the image of divine creation to elucidate the circular character of speculative science. This image allowed religious thought to comprehend reality as a totality that in the end returns to its beginning. Hegel's recourse to this image suggests that he considers the mode of pure thought that is reconstructed in the *Logic* to have preceded the actual creation of nature as well. As we saw above, Schelling's critique of Hegel presupposes this view. I would contend, however, that Hegel never meant to claim that pure thought actually unfolded itself before the world was created. If, he notes in the *Encyclopedia*, the world

is comprehended as ... a totality, then the question as to its beginning immediately ceases to be at issue. (Enc II, § 247 add.)

Speculative science is exclusively concerned with the *logical* beginning of the world, that is, with the principle that allows thought to comprehend the totality of its essential moments. Yet Hegel fails to explain unambiguously that the unfolding of pure thought reconstructed in the *Logic* does not precede nature itself, but rather the *reconstruction* of its essential moments in the philosophy of nature.

Admittedly, Hegel's ambivalent use of the term 'absolute idea' often makes it quite difficult to distinguish his reflection on the speculative system itself from his reflection on the world of which it purports to reconstruct the essential determinations. This ambivalence might be due to his effort at distinguishing speculative science from Kant's transcendental philosophy. On the one hand, Hegel considers his system to be exclusively concerned with the conceptual principles of all possible knowledge. He differs from Kant, on the other hand, by considering these principles to constitute at once the essential determinations of the ideas of thought, nature, and spirit themselves. Speculative science precisely comprehends the identity of these subjective and objective sides by enacting the unfolding of the concept in the element of pure thought. Divesting transcendental philosophy of its alleged subjectivism, Hegel defines the concept as such as the absolute 'point of indifference' and lets the system develop out of this point. Within this system, the *Logic* can equally be considered to precede the philosophies of nature and spirit as to result from them (L II, 496/782). Yet Hegel

does not really make it clear that the full circle accomplished in the element of pure thought *has no parallel* in the world such as it constitutes the object of empirical science. It is not without reason, therefore, that the later Schelling claims not to understand why the idea, after having raised itself to the highest subject, should 'lower itself again to mere being and let itself be dispersed into the spurious externality of space and time' (HMP 224/155).

I have argued, however, that Hegel exclusively conceives of this self-externalization as something that absolute knowing must enact in order to develop into a comprehensive system. Absolute knowing indeed conceives of itself as the ultimate actualization of the concept, but it does not conceive of the poorest determination of the concept – space and time – as resulting from God's resolve to immerse into externality. The only resolve at issue is the resolve of an as yet unaccomplished form of speculative science to reconstruct its genealogy by starting from the poorest determinations of the concept as such. As we have seen, this science starts with such concepts as do not pertain to either nature or spirit, but to possible ways of determining possible objects of experience in general. Only for this reason does the *Logic* precede the philosophies of nature and spirit. Contrary to the speculative system itself, the spatio-temporal reality it seeks to comprehend is incapable of turning its linearity into a circle. Hegel, however, does not seem to consider this discrepancy as something that post-Kantian philosophy should be worried about. This philosophy should rather limit itself – if this can be called a limitation – to comprehending the totality of concepts constitutive of the ideas of nature, spirit, and thought itself. However, it must also comprehend the condition of possibility of the concept's actualization in the realms of nature and spirit. In the next section I will argue that Hegel conceives of time as this condition.

## 5. Hegel's Metaphysics of Time

Although Hegel's system seems to leave no room for a fundamental reflection on the relation between the concept and time, his scattered remarks on this subject offer some valuable clues. Thus, the *Jena System Draft* from 1805/06 maintains that time constitutes a particular determination of the concept as such:

Time is the pure concept – the intuited empty self insofar as it is in movement, just as space [is the intuited empty self] insofar as it is in rest. (Jen III, 262/182)

The *Phenomenology* further develops this view by suggesting that the history of spirit increasingly annuls the power of time:

Time is the concept itself that is *there* and which presents itself to consciousness as empty intuition; for this reason, spirit necessarily appears in time, and it appears in time just so long as it has not grasped its pure concept, that is, has not annulled time.... Time, therefore, appears as the destiny and necessity of spirit insofar as it has not yet reached its completion.<sup>41</sup>

These passages suggest that Hegel conceives of time as the ultimate condition of the concept's unfolding in the realm of spirit. Since Hegel considers the history of spirit to rely on the increasing actualization of the concept as such, the power of time can only be annulled if time constitutes a mode of this concept. For, according to Hegel's logic, only if something divides off its contrary determination from itself is it capable of subsequently resolving the latter's purported independence. In order to elucidate this I will interpret Hegel's remarks on time in light of his radicalization of Kant's transcendental philosophy.

In *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel takes Kant's analysis of the various faculties involved in the production of knowledge to imply that pure reason distinguishes itself into sensibility, imagination, and the understanding.<sup>42</sup> Yet this dynamic conception of reason does not constitute the only difference between Kant and Hegel. As was argued in Chapter 2.3 and elsewhere, the early Hegel also aimed to move beyond Kant's merely subjective determination of the elements of pure thought. Accordingly, he notes in the *Encyclopedia* that space and time should not be conceived as mere subjective forms of intuition:

Like space, time is a *pure form of sensibility*, or of *intuition*, it is the non-sensible sensible, – but the difference between objectivity and a subjective consciousness set against it is irrelevant to space as much as to time.... Time is... the simple concept... in its as yet complete externality and abstractness, as intuited mere *becoming*.<sup>43</sup>

It can be inferred from this remark that Hegel took over Kant's conception of space and time, but replaced the transcendental ego with the concept as such. If the analogy between Kant's and Hegel's conceptions of time is pursued further, the movement enacted by the pure concept might be understood as follows. First, Hegel radicalizes Kant's position by considering the distinction between thought and the forms

of intuition to result from the movement in which reason opposes its contrary determinations. Transcendental philosophy, as Hegel sees it, presupposes this distinction without being able to reflect on the 'common root' of these faculties. On Hegel's account, sensibility is not opposed to thought, but constitutes the mode of thought that is completely determined by the forms of intuition. In order to actualize itself, reason initially posits one of its immanent determinations – space and time – over against itself, thus provisionally limiting its synthetic activity to, on the one hand, these forms themselves and, on the other hand – in its guise as understanding – to the contents provided by them.

Second, by replacing reason with the concept as such, Hegel can conceive of space and time as the initial determinations of the concept such as it unfolds in the element of spatio-temporal externality. Just like the most immediate mode of pure reason, the concept initially divides off its poorest possible determinations, that is, space and time, immerses itself in the element of externality opened up by the latter, and gradually resolves its externality so as to emerge as spirit. In this respect it can be said to make possible the development of the concept such as it is treated in the philosophies of nature and spirit. Yet the act of self-division Hegel implicitly attributes to the concept as such at once makes possible the unfolding of the latter such as it is treated in the *Logic*. For it is only by expelling its poorest possible determination – the forms of externality – that the concept can truly establish itself as the ultimate principle of pure thought and, within that element, posit its poorest determination as the concept of being. It is by means of this twofold self-limitation, in sum, that the concept creates – out of nothing – the element within which it can unfold the totality of concepts constitutive of the ideas of nature, spirit, and thought as such. It can thus unfold, in other words, as the objectifying thought that from the very beginning of human history has allowed human beings to achieve knowledge of the world, of other human beings, and of itself.

So far I have disregarded the difference between space and time.<sup>44</sup> According to Hegel, space constitutes the greatest self-externalization of the concept. As such, it constitutes the condition of possibility of any (experience of) externality. Insofar as the world is perceived as spatial, it does not testify to the negativity proper to the concept as such. According to Hegel, this spatial perspective dominates the idea of nature, that is, both our knowledge of nature and nature qua object of knowledge. No less than space, time constitutes a mode of the concept that underlies



any (experience of) externality. It differs from space, however, in that it allows thought to distinguish between a 'before' and 'after' and so to perceive changes. According to a passage from the *Encyclopedia* partly quoted above,

Time is the same principle as the ego=ego of pure self-consciousness, but it is this principle, that is, the simple concept, in its as yet complete externality and abstractness, as intuited mere *becoming*. (Enc II, § 258 rem.)

By perceiving the world as temporal we become aware of the negativity inherent in all finite things. The form of time allows us not merely to measure the speed of moving objects, but also to comprehend the modes of self-determination exhibited by both inorganic and organic nature. It also allows us, finally, to comprehend the modes of self-determination exhibited by the history of spirit. Hegel assigns the temporal form of externality not merely to our perception of world history, however, but also to world history itself:

The history of the world . . . is, therefore, the exposition [*Auslegung*] of spirit in time, just as the idea qua nature exposes itself in space.<sup>45</sup>

All finite beings must yield to a negativity that impels them to give up their actual state. Time is, in other words, the sensible mode of what the *Logic* calls abstract negativity or spurious infinity.<sup>46</sup> The concept, on the other hand, is nothing but the movement in which it opposes its contrary determinations so as to establish itself as their unity. This absolute negativity underlies any mode of self-determination. Insofar as something is comprehended from a speculative point of view, it cannot resist the negativity of the concept:

Time is the negative in the sensible; thought is the same negativity, but it is the innermost, infinite form itself, in which therefore all beings are dissolved. (LPH 103/77)

This raises the question as to how Hegel conceived of the relation between these two modes of negativity. Given my analysis of Hegel's conception of negativity in Chapter 3 as well as of the asymmetrical relation between contrary determinations in Chapter 4, we

are now sufficiently prepared to comprehend the passage from the *Phenomenology* partly quoted at the beginning of this section:

Time is the concept itself that is *there* and presents itself to consciousness as empty intuition; for this reason, spirit necessarily appears in time, and it appears in time just so long as it has not grasped its pure concept, that is, has not annulled time. [Time] is ... the merely intuited concept; when the latter comprehends itself, it sublates its temporal form, comprehends intuition and enacts itself as comprehended and comprehending intuition. Time, therefore, appears as the destiny and necessity of spirit insofar as it has not yet reached its completion. (Phen 524–25/487)

A similar reflection occurs in the *Encyclopedia*:

The concept however, in its freely existing identity with itself, ... is in and for itself the absolute negativity and freedom. Therefore, time does not exert power over it, and it is neither within time, nor something temporal. It is, to the contrary, rather the *concept* that exerts power over time, which is this negativity merely as externality.<sup>47</sup>

I take it that both passages refer, first, to the sway of the concept such as it manifests itself in the realms of nature and spirit. Seen from a speculative point of view, these realms each in their own way testify to ever richer modes of self-determination, that is, to modes of the concept which are increasingly capable of annulling the power of time. Together, these modes define the ideas of nature and spirit that constitute the content of speculative science. Second, these passages also refer to the mode of the concept that has annulled the temporal form of externality in an absolute way, that is, to philosophy in general and speculative science in particular. Since speculative science, comprehending the essential moments of pure thought, nature, and spirit, pertains to that which is 'absolutely present' (RH 182/150), it has completely resolved the spurious mode of negativity proper to time.

Hegel's threefold speculative system, I have argued, reconstructs the concept's actualization in the elements of pure thought and of thought insofar as it is defined by spatio-temporal externality. In order to elaborate this system, Hegel must regard the concept itself to produce the very element of its subsequent actualization as well. For only if the concept as such divides off and opposes the forms of externality

can it subsequently resolve the purported independence of the spatio-temporal sphere, something that speculative science itself achieves in the highest possible way. Hegel, in sum, must conceive of the concept – that is, of absolute negativity – as a principle that is necessarily more powerful than the abstract negativity which presents itself as time. It is far from sure, however, whether this distinction between absolute and abstract negativity permits an adequate comprehension of the tragic dimension of world-historical events. For can it still be maintained that the principle of self-determination constitutes the ultimate and unique principle of human life, culture and history? And can it still be maintained that this principle must necessarily prevail?

## 6. The Initial Entanglement of Concept and Time

According to Hegel, world history will never completely overcome the contingency proper to the realm of nature.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, however, he considers the temporal element of world history increasingly to give way to the tremendous force of the concept. This implies, as I argued above, that he considers time itself to result from the initial self-externalization of the concept. By positing one of its moments as a mere form of externality, the concept can let processes of self-determination increasingly prevail over processes of mere change. Only by considering abstract negativity as a subordinate mode of absolute negativity, in other words, can Hegel maintain that the latter must increasingly overcome the proper force of the former.

This result might allow us, in turn, to conceive of the ‘common root’ of these contrary modes of negativity not so much in terms of their synthetic unity as in terms of their initial entanglement. On this view, speculative science establishes its basic principle – the concept as such – by disentangling the contrary moments of a negativity that is itself neither absolute nor abstract. According to this latter negativity – which I propose to call tragic negativity – contrary determinations do not necessarily succeed in resolving the purported independence of their counterpart. Insofar as tragic negativity impels something to posit and resolve the opposition of its contrary moments, it shares common ground with absolute negativity. It differs from absolute negativity, however, by preventing both contrary moments from reducing their contrary to a subordinate moment. As I see it, speculative science – in accordance with the prevailing tendency of philosophy as such – recoils from this tragic negativity by letting one moment establish itself as the unique principle of both. When Hegel posits absolute negativity

as the absolute principle of thought, he thereby reduces its contrary moment to a mode of negativity that is allowed to reign over the subordinate realm of externality alone. This latter mode of negativity only thus appears as time, that is, as abstract negativity.<sup>49</sup> But what if the very opposition between concept and time resulted from an archi-annulment of tragic negativity? What if this annulment is repeated whenever thought relies on clear-cut oppositions, but no less whenever it dialectically resolves such oppositions?

As was argued above, Hegel's threefold system does not account for the movement in which the concept divides off its contrary moment so as to posit the latter as a mere form of externality. His remarks on the relation between concept and time make it clear, however, that he knowingly presupposed this movement throughout his major works. Whereas I hold that Hegel could have made explicit this presupposition, he could not have retrieved, in my view, the struggle of absolute negativity to disentangle itself from tragic negativity so as to posit itself as absolute and its contrary as merely abstract. Just like Kant had to ignore the common root of thought and intuition, Hegel had to ignore this entanglement. He did this, I have argued, by replacing it with the dialectical unity of absolute and abstract negativity. Yet nothing prevents us from interpreting this unity not so much as an absolute beginning, but as the prevailing result of an infinite struggle. This reinterpretation might yield a conception of human life, culture, and history that takes these realms to testify not only to modes of self-determination, but also to collisions that do not necessarily yield their resolution. Before turning to the realm of human culture, however, I will further examine the middle part of Hegel's system. Now that the concept's externalization into space and time has emerged as the first moment of the idea of nature, the next chapter can consider Hegel's philosophy of nature as such.

# 6

## Nature

### 1. Introduction

This chapter complements the previous one by examining the philosophy of nature Hegel elaborated, between 1803 and 1806, in the so-called *Jena System Drafts*. I take the view that these texts, notwithstanding their obscurity, shed more light on the various layers of his philosophy of nature than the second part of the later *Encyclopedia*. For it is only in these early drafts, as I will argue, that Hegel seeks to conceive of the continuity between nature and spirit by re-interpreting Kant's conception of space and time. If, as I believe, later works such as the *Phenomenology*, the *Logic*, and the *Encyclopedia* tacitly presuppose rather than abandon this conception, then it might be worthwhile to return, once again, to the dawn of speculative science.

Both in his early and later philosophy of nature Hegel regards the particular spheres of nature as testifying to particular modes of self-determination. As we have seen, he comprehends the totality of these modes by letting the concept as such – that is, the principle of any form of self-determination – unfold in the element of spatio-temporal exteriority. Unlike the philosophy of nature elaborated in the *Encyclopedia*, however, the *Jena System Drafts* treat space and time not merely as basic determinations of the idea of nature, but also as pure forms of intuition. According to these early texts, the concept initially determines itself as aether, space and time, reaches its turning point in the animal, and culminates in the distinction between the ego and the forms of intuition. Hegel's intriguing reflections on the animal will allow me both to expose and to question his dialectical conception of the relation between concept and time.

Hegel developed the *Jena System Drafts* in the context of his courses on logic, metaphysics, philosophy of nature, and philosophy of spirit.<sup>1</sup> The first, sometimes very fragmentary, text from 1803/04 is devoted to nature and spirit. The second text deals with logic, metaphysics, and philosophy of nature. In the last text Hegel again elaborates a philosophy of nature and a philosophy of spirit. The early drafts are more tentative than the later philosophy of nature, but also more lively. This is another reason why they deserve much more attention, in my view, than they have so far received.<sup>2</sup> Since my reading of Hegel is motivated primarily by systematic concerns, I will disregard the differences between the several drafts.<sup>3</sup> Before turning to Hegel's early philosophy of nature, I will briefly reconsider Hegel's conception of nature as such.

## 2. The Middle Term between Nature and Consciousness

We saw in the previous chapter that Hegel, in the wake of Schelling, departed from Kant by conceiving of space and time not merely as subjective forms of intuition, but also as the forms of externality constitutive of the idea of nature as such. It turned out that Hegel conceived of space and time as resulting from the primary self-determination of the concept as such. On this view, the concept can only establish itself as such by excluding its contrary moment from itself and reducing this moment to the twofold form of externality.<sup>4</sup> As we have seen, Hegel's philosophy of nature completely disregards the difference between the concepts constitutive of the natural sciences and the essential determinations of the idea of nature itself.<sup>5</sup> Whereas Kant regarded the idea of nature as a mode of the unconditional immune to any determination, Hegel maintains that the idea of nature is nothing but the totality of its essential determinations, that is, of particular determinations of the concept as such. Since these determinations constitute at once the a priori basis of the natural sciences, Hegel can – and must – draw on the results of these sciences to expose the essential determinations of the idea of nature.<sup>6</sup>

The individual forms of nature are to a large extent subjected to contingency. It would seem, therefore, that a philosophy of nature has little chance to penetrate into the depths of nature. As I argued in the previous chapter, however, Hegel's philosophy of nature is exclusively concerned with nature insofar as it is determined by the totality of its conceptual determinations. Hegel reconstructs this totality, first, by positing the most general forms of externality as poorest determinations

of the concept as such and, second, by comprehending each determination as prevailing over the power of externality to a larger extent than the preceding one.

Accordingly, the *Encyclopedia* maintains that the animal constitutes the supreme actualization of the concept in the sphere of nature (Enc II, § 376). Yet even though animals are capable of movement and feeling, they remain largely determined by the abstract externality of space and time. Due to this 'natural inadequacy', the animal can become unified with its universality – the species – only by reproducing itself before dying, that is, by perishing insofar as it is individual.<sup>7</sup> It is only in human consciousness that individuality and universality are truly unified, for consciousness, appropriating the general features of the contents given in sense perception, directs itself to the conceptual order and hence to the concept as such.<sup>8</sup> Human consciousness is to a far lesser extent determined by the externality of space and time than the animal. Only in consciousness do these modes of externality occur as forms that allow it to acquire knowledge of nature and of itself. This is what Hegel, in line with Schelling, considers to be the ultimate aim of nature:

It is the aim of nature to kill itself and to break through the rind of the immediate, of the sensible, to burn itself, like Phoenix, in order to emerge, rejuvenated, out of this externality as spirit.<sup>9</sup>

The *Differenzschrift* refers to this transition in equally poetic language:

The point of transition, the middle term through which identity constructing itself as nature passes over to identity constructing itself as intelligence, is the interiorization of the light of nature, the lightning stroke of the ideal upon the real, as Schelling calls it, its self-constitution as point. (D 111/170)

The *Differenzschrift*, as we saw in the previous chapter, also adopts the Schellingian view that consciousness 'takes along the whole self-construction of nature to the other side', that is, to the side of knowledge (111–12/170). The *Jena System Drafts* likewise betray the influence of Schelling. However, only in these latter texts does Hegel consider the interiorization of nature's light to begin with the animal's capacity to perceive. The animal, he here maintains, interiorizes space and time to such an extent that it can begin to determine its environment from within instead of being completely determined from without.

The philosophy of nature elaborated in the *Encyclopedia* conceives of space and time as the forms of externality constitutive of both the natural sciences and nature insofar as it constitutes the object of these sciences. When Hegel at the end of this text briefly addresses the transition from nature to consciousness, he no longer dwells on the re-emergence of space and time as pure forms of intuition. The only reference to these forms occurs in an addition that is most likely to stem from his early Jena lectures:

[T]he organism... is space and time, and at the same time neither spatial nor temporal: it perceives something that is spatial and temporal, something, that is, which is distinguished from itself.... This movement of intuition is the general element of sensibility. (Enc II, § 357, add. 2)

In the *Jena System Draft* from 1803/04 we find a similar remark:

[T]he animal is time...; it is the time in which its impressions pass by as individual impressions. (Jen I, 180)

In my view, only the *Jena System Drafts* offer the context that makes it possible to make sense of this passage, and, hence, of the way in which the early Hegel tried to bridge the gap between nature and spirit produced by Kant. The striking difference between the main text of the *Encyclopedia* from 1817/1830 and the additions largely stemming from the Jena period might be due to the fact that the *Encyclopedia* has abandoned the task of constructing the genesis of human consciousness. Notwithstanding its linear development, the later philosophy of nature seems to be exclusively concerned with the concepts constitutive of the natural sciences. Matter, movement, life, or the animal, are nothing but such concepts. In the *Jena System Drafts*, by contrast, this Kantian perspective still seems to be entangled with the Schellingian question concerning the emergence of human consciousness out of nature.

Whenever Hegel after 1806 considers the sphere of human thought, he has already, and necessarily so, moved beyond the interiorization of the forms of externality that defines animal life. Neither do his later texts elaborate on space and time as pure forms of intuition. As a matter of fact, the philosophy of spirit that constitutes the final part of the *Encyclopedia* contains but a few remarks on time and memory, remarks that are of psychological rather than ontological interest. The *Phenomenology*



of *Spirit*, for its part, sets out from a mode of consciousness – sense certainty – that is directed to objects that present themselves as ‘here’ and ‘now’ (Phen 75–76/63–64). Neither does Hegel in this context dwell on the modes of space and time that according to Kant underlie any perception of something as ‘here’ and ‘now’. Hegel maintains in the *Jena System Drafts*, by contrast, that it is in the animal that the concept actually begins to distinguish itself from the pure forms of space and time. That is, only when nature evolves the capacity to perceive do the concept as such and the forms of externality begin to undo their initial entanglement. Before addressing the passages devoted to this pivotal moment, I will examine the philosophy of nature outlined in the *Jena System Drafts* as a whole.

### 3. Aether

Hegel’s early philosophy of nature reconstructs the totality of the essential determinations of nature by considering the concept – that is, the force that underlies every attempt of something to determine itself from within – such as it occurs in the element of externality.<sup>10</sup> In order to systematically reconstruct the essential determinations of nature, Hegel begins by positing the poorest mode of the concept in the element of externality and subsequently gives it free rein, as it were, to overcome its inherent one-sidedness.<sup>11</sup> Unlike both the *Encyclopedia* and Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, the Jena drafts do not begin with space and time, but with a concept that even precedes the difference between space and time, namely, aether.<sup>12</sup> Hegel considers this concept, much discussed in his time, to constitute an appropriate beginning of a speculative philosophy of nature because it lacks all possible determination.<sup>13</sup> Completely formless and invisible, it was considered to constitute the ultimate substance of the visible world, that is, the condition of possibility of all processes in which matter acquires form.<sup>14</sup> In Hegel’s view, this ultimate element of nature is not opposed to spirit, but constitutes just as much as spirit a mode of the idea as such, that is, of the concept insofar as it actualizes itself in a particular sphere. Yet aether is a mode of the idea in which the proper nature of the latter – self-determination – has in no way begun to manifest itself. This nature manifests itself only in the idea qua spirit:

Now the idea... can be called *absolute matter* or *aether*. It turns out that this is equivalent to pure spirit, for this absolute matter is

nothing sensible, but is the concept qua pure concept in itself, which is, as such, existing spirit.<sup>15</sup>

The idea can be called 'absolute matter' or 'aether' insofar as one abstracts from its determination as spirit (Jen III, 3). Although aether is, in itself, completely undetermined, it is distinguished from the concept such as it enacts itself in the element of thought. Aether, Hegel writes, is

the infinite *elasticity* that scorns any form and determinateness, dissolving them into itself, and precisely for that reason it is the absolute weakness and capacity of taking any shape whatsoever. . . . Thus, aether does not pervade everything, but is itself everything, for it is *being*. . . . This pure essence has annulled and left behind the *difference qua difference* and has become opposed to it, or, it is the in-itself that has not exposed the becoming belonging to it as this essence; it is merely pregnant matter. (Jen III, 3)

Clearly, the concept of aether is to the philosophy of nature what the concept of being is to speculative logic. Both parts of the system set out from a mode of the concept that is absolutely undetermined and, as such, constitutes the condition of possibility of any determination. The difference between the parts of the system merely hinges on the difference between the elements wherein the concept unfolds its immanent determinations. In order to comprehend the idea of nature one must set out, according to Hegel, from the conceptual determination of nature that has not yet begun to distinguish its contrary moments. The concept of aether meets this demand in the best possible way.

#### 4. Space and Time

The *Jena System Draft* from 1804/05 dwells most extensively on the development of the concepts 'space' and 'time' out of the concept 'aether'.<sup>16</sup> Hegel here begins by determining aether itself with regard to the contrary moments constitutive of the concept as such. This principle comprehends the moments of identity and difference, or, to be more precise, the moments of self-identification and self-differentiation.<sup>17</sup> Now Hegel argues that the concept of aether has not yet differentiated between the moments of identity and difference at all, since it pertains precisely to nature insofar as it is neither distinguished within itself nor from something outside itself.<sup>18</sup> The concept of aether, in other

words, refers to a mode of the concept in which the moment of difference, or infinite negativity, is as yet completely implicit. The movement in which the two moments of the pure concept begin to distinguish themselves first results, Hegel notes, in space and time:

Space and time are the moments of aether insofar as it immediately discloses itself as truly infinite, and infinity itself is movement and [it is], as totality, a system of spheres or movements. (Jen II, 205)

Time and space constitute the opposition between the infinite and the self-identical, [they are] in nature as its idea, or [they are the idea of nature] itself insofar as it is determined as absolutely self-identical. (206)

According to Hegel, space and time constitute the first determinations of nature that exhibit the difference between the moments of identity and difference. Whereas space pertains to self-identical objects, time allows thought to grasp objects as becoming different from what they were. Thus, time is the first determination of nature that manifests the infinite negativity proper to the concept as such. However, since time merely allows thought to determine mechanical movement, it manifests this negativity as yet in an inadequate way. Hegel comprehends this inadequacy by arguing that both space and time are as yet completely dominated by the moment of identity, that is, by indifference. The moment of identity, characteristic of aether, initially prevails to such an extent that the moment of difference, negativity, or infinity cannot truly manifest itself even in the concept of time. Hegel, as we have seen, argues in the *Essay on Natural Law* that within Greek culture the principle of rational ethical life was initially completely immersed in archaic ethical life. In the same way, he begins his philosophy of nature by considering the concept such as it is completely immersed in the moment of indifference. On this view, time pertains to the endless transition of something into its contrary rather than to the infinite principle of self-determination:

Time... does not occur as totality, or it does not exist as the ground of this infinity, the infinity, that is, which is in itself undivided; or [this latter infinity is] not merely the transition into its opposite and, thence, back into the first; therefore, [time] is not the true infinite.<sup>19</sup>

Even less than time does space testify to the infinity attained in processes of self-actualization; it merely pertains to the annulment of negativity.<sup>20</sup> Thus, it might be argued that Hegel conceives of space and time as the first determinations of nature in which the contrary moments of the concept – identity and difference – begin to undo their initial entanglement. Space and time can do this, however, only by positing their contrary moment over against themselves. Within the realm of the logical idea, as we have seen, the pure concepts ‘being’ and ‘nothing’ completely exclude their contrary moments. Similarly, the concept ‘space’ completely excludes the moment of difference and the concept ‘time’ completely excludes the moment of identity. This means that both space and time are governed by abstract negativity.

Since space and time, according to Hegel, have not yet begun to incorporate their contrary moments, they do not testify to the negativity proper to the concept as such. This entails that they are unable to acquire true independence. Unable to maintain their mutual difference, they turn into their contrary as soon as they set out to actualize themselves.<sup>21</sup> As I see it, Hegel’s description of this process exclusively pertains to the concepts of space and time such as they are treated in Hegel’s philosophy of nature itself. The nature of this process can best be explained, it seems to me, by considering the implications of the concept ‘movement’. When we perceive a moving object, its spatial starting point is immediately transformed into the temporal beginning of a certain span of time. As soon as there is movement, a ‘here’ is transformed into a ‘now’. Or, to put it differently, only insofar as movement occurs does it become possible to determine a ‘here-now’ in either spatial or temporal terms, that is, to distinguish between the temporal and the spatial definition of a specific point. Only this distinction between space and time permits the measurement of speed:

[A]lthough the ‘here’ is the simple unity [*das Einfache*] proper to the point, it is a point that is itself space. Yet this ‘here’ is time as well; ... the ‘here’ is at once ‘now’, for it is the point of *duration*.<sup>22</sup>

However, Hegel cannot refer to what actually happens when we perceive movement. Abstracting from this subjective perspective, he conceives of space and time as the first modifications of the pure concept in which the moments of identity and difference are distinguished. Space constitutes a mode of the concept in which the moment of negativity is as yet completely implicit. Time, on the other hand, constitutes a mode of the concept in which this negativity, due to the overall dominance

of abstract negativity, can merely unfold as spurious infinity (cf. Jen II, 209). Since neither space nor time has established the synthetic unity of identity and difference proper to the concept as such, they are impelled from within to resolve their one-sidedness.

Hegel seems to comprehend this process as follows. Whereas nature itself remains for ever determined by space, the philosophy of nature regards the concept of space as the implicit unity of its contrary moments and hence as the urge to actualize this unity. The concept of space does this by letting the moment of difference unfold into the concept of limit or, more specifically, into the concept of the point. By thus positing the point as its immanent determination, space incorporates the moment of difference into itself. This means that it negates its absolute indifference. Once space has determined itself by means of this first negation, it is impelled to negate this its immanent determination as well. It can only enact this second negation, Hegel maintains, by negating the indifference proper to space as such. This second negation transforms the spatial point into a point that is absolutely incompatible with a multitude of points outside itself, that is, into an all-exclusive 'now'.<sup>23</sup> Thus, impelled from within to annul its abstract identity, the concept of space cannot but turn into the concept of time. By letting a concept such as space attempt to establish the unity of its contrary determinations, Hegel can systematically reconstruct the essential moments of nature. Again, I would like to emphasize that this process occurs nowhere else than in the philosophy of nature itself.

I argued above that Hegel considers time to be exclusively determined by the moment of difference or negativity. Just as space turns into time by unfolding the moment of difference inherent in it, time turns into space by developing the moment of identity inherent in it. Hegel seems to comprehend this development by conceiving of the past as the temporal dimension in which the absolute unrest proper to time as such has come to a standstill. Time, he notes, is that which 'out of the determination of infinity... has turned into its contrary, namely, the determination of self-identity', that is, into the 'self-identical indifference' of space (210). It seems to me, however, that it is rather unconvincing to comprehend the transition from time to space by referring to a particular temporal dimension, for the difference between past, present, and future is of no concern to the natural sciences. It is not without reason, I hold, that the *Encyclopedia* hardly touches upon these subjective dimensions of time.<sup>24</sup>

In any event, space and time are what they are by identifying, so to speak, with either the moment of identity or the moment of difference. Just as the concepts of being and nothing, they cannot survive their

effort at incorporating their contrary moments. Seen from this perspective, time constitutes a mode of the concept in which absolute negativity can merely unfold as abstract negativity, that is, as a mode of negativity that does not allow of real differences:

Time is as continuous as space is, for it is abstract negativity relating itself to itself, and in this abstraction there is as yet no difference of a real nature. (Enc II, § 258, rem.)

This abstract negativity defines the mode of time that constitutes a basic principle of the natural sciences. Only with regard to this level does Hegel seem to conceive of space and time as equally relevant. For only insofar as the distinction between space and time allows thought to determine the speed of moving objects can time be defined as a sequence of indifferent now-moments. At this level, time is reduced to a form that is complementary to space and shares in the indifference characteristic of the latter:

As movement actualizes itself, the moment of absolute movement, time as infinity, is dispersed into points, points which, once incorporated in space, are . . . indifferent to one another; this is the soulless image of infinity.<sup>25</sup>

Thus conceived, space and time present themselves as the most basic determinations of the natural sciences and their objects. Contrary to Kant, however, Hegel does not take for granted the distinction between space and time, nor that between thought and the forms of intuition. Already in this early Jena draft he rather conceives of space and time as external manifestations of the very principle of self-determination. These most external modes of the concept allow thought to locate objects and to perceive movement, but not to grasp processes of self-determination.

## 5. Inorganic and Organic Nature

The Jena texts devoted to the principles of mechanics, physics, chemistry, and biology are elusive and sometimes hardly comprehensible. In order to outline the basic idea of these sections I will take recourse to relevant passages from the *Encyclopedia* and other texts. According to Hegel, aether, space, and time constitute the most general determinations of the idea of nature. These determinations delimit the realm

of nature as such. He further maintains that everything which occurs within this realm is characterized by two contrary movements. Insofar as something is determined by matter, it flees from its ideal centre. Insofar as something is determined by the concept, it determines itself from within. Thus, whereas matter on the one hand goes against the grain of the concept, it on the other hand allows processes of self-determination to occur in the element of externality in the first place. It should be noted that matter itself is as much a determination of the concept as aether, space, and time, albeit a determination that has by no means begun to exhibit the proper nature of the concept.<sup>26</sup> Inorganic nature, by contrast, already testifies to primitive modes of self-determination. Yet although the form of a crystal, for instance, is not completely determined by external influences, the crystal has not succeeded in actually distinguishing its inner principle from its external form. This means that the centrifugal movement of matter is here as yet prevailing (cf. *Aesth* I, 175/130). These contrary movements, which might be called 'matter' and 'form', allow Hegel to order all possible objects of the natural sciences with regard to their capacity to resist the indifference proper to matter, that is, to determine themselves from within.

In nature itself, Hegel maintains, the principle of self-determination enacts itself exclusively at the level of individual beings.<sup>27</sup> Individual plants or animals cannot but reproduce the same species. The natural sciences, however, are concerned not so much with individuals as with the laws and principles underlying the various ways in which matter can assume form. As Hegel sees it, these sciences are concerned with forms of inorganic nature that to some extent annul the indifference of the related elements involved, such as planetary rotations, magnetism, electricity, and chemical processes. A chemical element, for example, owes its identity exclusively to its relation to all other elements.<sup>28</sup> Yet it is only in organic nature that the inner and the outer – or identity and difference – have been reduced to one-sided moments of an encompassing whole. Any organism is animated by an inner principle that manifests itself outwardly as the totality of particular functions and characteristics of its species. However, it is only in the animal, Hegel maintains, that the concept begins to acquire an adequate reality.<sup>29</sup>

## 6. The Animal

In an addition to the text of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel notes that the processes characteristic of the animal find their supreme expression in the perfect animal, that is, in the human organism (*Enc* II, § 352, add.).

He maintains, moreover, that the unfolding of these processes in lower species can only be comprehended against the background of this 'highest organism'. There is no doubt that Hegel's early understanding of the animal also relies on his comprehension of human consciousness, as I hope will become clear in what follows.

Hegel discusses the animal in the *Jena System Drafts* from 1803/04 and 1805/06.<sup>30</sup> Both texts examine the ultimate principle of biology insofar as it pertains to animal life. Contrary to biology itself, Hegel comprehends this principle as a particular mode of self-determination, that is, as a particular mode of the concept as such. Insofar as an organism is capable of determining its universality, that is, the species, from within, it resists the external mode of causality prevalent in inorganic nature.<sup>31</sup> Animals are largely determined by the urge to annul the experience of a deficiency, that is, by desire. The activities meant to achieve satisfaction can be directed to either inorganic nature, plants, or other animals. By breathing, eating, and drinking, animals sustain their individual existence, by mating, the existence of the species.

Contrary to plants, animals also possess a faculty of perception. This faculty, Hegel maintains, first establishes the difference between the perceiving animal and that which it perceives, for only insofar as an organism is capable of perception does it truly distinguish itself from what it is not.<sup>32</sup> It is by dint of the senses that the animal, on the one hand, can distinguish itself from its environment, and, on the other, can appropriate things without destroying their independence.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the sense of vision allows the animal to relate to light, space, lines, planes, and movement, and hence to liberate itself from nature to the highest possible extent (Jen I, 162). Yet whether the animal devours or perceives something, its impressions of hunger, satisfaction, shapes, colors, or movements follow one another in such a way that the animal *cannot turn them into representations*. Completely absorbed by its momentary perceptions, the animal cannot disentangle itself from their content.<sup>34</sup>

Now Hegel goes on to argue that the movement in which the concept distinguishes its contrary moments in order to establish their unity occurs in the animal in a particular way, namely, as *time*. It is, he notes, the sense of vision in particular that testifies to the 'absolute concept in its abstraction as time' (161). In the animal, the concept begins

to idealize itself and to articulate itself in its conceptual moments; in the animal this movement exists as time. (166)



In order to comprehend the animal as the missing link, so to speak, between nature and spirit, Hegel reverts to his earlier account of space and time as forms of externality, but he now conceives of these forms in a Kantian vein, that is, as forms that make it possible to perceive something at all. Hegel seems to regard the animal as the first form of nature capable of enacting time by itself rather than being governed by it. For the perceiving animal, I take him to mean, can be considered to establish itself as an ideal point that is constantly determined anew. Feeling hungry, the animal coincides with the hunger it feels; becoming aware of something edible, it is completely absorbed by that which it smells, sees, or hears; eating, it coincides with the momentary pleasure of eating. Thus, the animal relates to the content of its perceptions in such a way that this content is immediately annulled by the subsequent one. Yet the faculty of perception itself does not change:

[T]he animal is this subsuming point, that is, a point which in itself, as a determinate point, passes by and in this its passing by remains identical to itself. (166)

In the perceiving animal, Hegel suggests, the concept as such enacts itself as an ideal, self-identical point of which each momentary determination is immediately annulled by the subsequent one. Insofar as the faculty of perception is at each moment determined differently, it constantly distinguishes itself from itself, and insofar as it constantly annuls its actual determination, it constantly coincides with itself. Since this is, according to Hegel, precisely the movement we call time, he can maintain that the concept enacts itself as time for the first time in the animal. Distinguished from the rest of nature by its capacity to perceive, the animal is, essentially, nothing but the infinite sequence of momentary determinations that we call time.

Contrary to inorganic beings and plants, the animal is not merely submitted to actual changes, but is capable of enacting these changes at an ideal level. Since the ideal, self-identical 'point' that underlies its perceptions is not situated in space and time itself, the changes that occur within the faculty of perception are of a completely different nature than the corporeal changes the animal undergoes as well.<sup>35</sup> However, the faculty of perception such as it emerges in the animal cannot yet withdraw from its successive perceptions. In a marginal note related to the passage quoted above, Hegel remarks that the animal 'is not master

of time' (166). Constantly carried away by the stream of its successive perceptions, the animal is unable to transform them into true representations. It can determine its proper position, move itself, express itself by means of sounds, but it cannot, in Hegel's view, distinguish itself from time:

The whole organism attempts to transform itself into a theoretical process, into a generality that has become for itself; but the absolute concept exists only as the organic articulation of the animal, and the organism is incapable of raising itself into this self-contained generality so as to become absolutely identical with it. (179)

[T]he animal is time...; it is the time in which its impressions pass by as individual impressions; generality occurs merely as the form of necessity, and infinity merely as the hidden unity of the oppositions proper to these impressions. (180)

In the animal qua organism, the concept merely occurs as the unfolding of its animating principle into a totality of mutually dependent moments. Insofar as the animal is capable of perceiving, it establishes the unchanging 'point' underlying its subsequent perceptions, a point that has traditionally been called its soul. Yet since the animal is exclusively directed to the content of its subsequent perceptions, the animal is incapable of relating to this point itself.<sup>36</sup> The animal 'is' its hunger, its food, its satiety, its hunger. Its faculty of perception constantly coincides with a particular perception, while it also immediately negates this its particular determination. Due to this spurious negativity, its hunger turns into satiety, its satiety into hunger, its desire into satisfaction, its satisfaction into desire, its fear into rest, its rest into fear. This means that each of its perceptions is opposed not so much to the general faculty of perception itself as to a contrary perception. The ideality of this faculty itself, Hegel notes,

occurs merely as the other side of the opposition, the general [occurs] merely [as] a transition into something else; the individual [impression] is annulled [*aufgehoben*] by its contrary, by the other of itself, but these contraries are two different activities, two impressions. (180)

Hegel here suggests, I take it, that the animal cannot recognize its hunger and its satiety, for instance, as two contrary determinations of the same faculty of perception.<sup>37</sup> In this case, the faculty of perception cannot enact itself as the unity of its contrary determinations, but merely as the endless sequence of contrary perceptions that we call time.

Only insofar as the animal succeeds in relating its contrary perceptions to their underlying identity does it turn its faculty of perception into consciousness, thus truly testifying to the movement proper to the concept as such. This movement, Hegel notes in a remarkable passage, is equally enacted by the contents which the perceiving animal posits over against itself:

[I]nsofar as the blue that is actually experienced immediately ceases to be this actual blue and turns into its contrary, [namely,] into all colors that are set against it, that is, into the unity of all colors that are potentially opposed to it; insofar as the blue that is actually experienced is immediately transformed into color as such, the impression is raised above itself and has turned into consciousness, and the animal has become rational. (181)

When the animal is no longer completely absorbed in its subsequent perceptions, but directs itself to what they have in common, it will no longer experience itself as its successive hunger and satiety, but rather as the general faculty of perception underlying these contrary determinations, that is, as 'ego'. The ultimate principle of the animal consists in the absolute unity of self-identification and self-differentiation. The animal itself, however, is unable to actualize this its principle. Just like logical concepts are unable to actualize the unity of their contrary determinations without turning into a less one-sided concept, the animal cannot actualize its principle without turning into human consciousness.

## 7. Human Consciousness

In human consciousness, according to Hegel, the faculty of perception constitutes no longer an abstract point that owes its determination exclusively to the stream of its successive impressions. As soon as the faculty of perception withdraws, as it were, from its impressions, a difference emerges between the faculty of perception itself and the general form in which these perceptions occur, that is, between the ego and

space and time. Consciousness, Hegel notes at the beginning of his first Jena philosophy of spirit,

must acquire existence, ... or posit as external that which it, in intuition, has formally distinguished [namely, time and space], such that both opposites, that which intuits and that which is intuited, divide off themselves and consciousness occurs as an existing middle.<sup>38</sup>

The difference between the intuiting subject and the intuited forms of externality opens up the space wherein actual perceptions can be transformed into representations, and representations into thoughts. Contracting into a self-identical ego, the faculty of perception divides off the abstract modes of identity and difference from itself so as to posit them over against itself. Thus untangling the moments of identity and difference proper to the concept as such, it transforms these moments into the forms of intuition that underlie all perceptions.<sup>39</sup> This entails, on the other hand, that the concept can now begin to determine itself as the principle of pure thought. As we saw in Chapter 4.4, the *Logic* no less regards the self-constitution of consciousness as emerging from its entanglement with the contents to which it relates:

[I]n its very intuiting and, in general, in its entanglement with the negative of itself [*in seiner Verwicklung mit dem Negativen seiner*], with the other, consciousness is at one with itself. (L I, 175/158)

Only in his early philosophy of nature, however, does Hegel consider this self-identification of consciousness to emerge from the entanglement of ego and time such as it defines the animal faculty of perception. On this account, the animal faculty of perception is a mode of the concept that, as such, contains the moments of identity and difference. In order to establish their unity, these moments must first annul their initial entanglement. The moment of identity turns into consciousness by contracting, as it were, into self-identity and positing the moment of difference over against itself, thus determining this abstract moment as time. At the same time, it also posits the abstract mode of identity over against itself, a mode which is thus determined as space:

Time is the pure concept – the intuited empty self insofar as it is in movement, just as space [is the intuited empty self] insofar as it is in rest.<sup>40</sup>

Withdrawing from the sequence of its perceptions, human consciousness can direct itself to objects that it perceives as occurring in space and time. It does not yet realize, however, that space and time constitute the forms of intuition it had to divide off from itself in order to constitute itself as a 'self' in the first place (cf. *Jen I*, 197/218). The 'universal element' of space and time (199/219) allows consciousness to withdraw from its immediate perceptions (now-hunger, now-satisfied, now-hunger) so as to appropriate their content. If the irreversible sequence of perceptions no longer determines the content of its thoughts, this faculty itself is transformed into the faculty of representation or imagination. This faculty allows consciousness to invoke representations without being completely dependent on the temporal order of its impressions. Although Hegel does not refer to his predecessor, this moment can be said to constitute the starting point of Kant's transcendental philosophy.

In consciousness, Hegel continues,

the determinacy of the impression, the 'this' of time and space, has been annulled, and their succession and coordination now manifests itself as free; [the impression] is completely indifferent with regard to the universal element. (199/219)

Just like the animal, [spirit is] time . . . , and it is just as much the freedom of time; this pure subject, that is free of its content but also master of it. (*Jen III*, 171/86)

The mode of consciousness to which Hegel here refers is empirical imagination (*Jen I*, 198/219). In his view, this imagination relies on a merely abstract form of infinity, namely, the pure forms of intuition. Clearly, these forms alone do not suffice to let consciousness acquire a truly human mode of thought. Taken in isolation, they merely yield 'an empty dreaming, whether awake or asleep, that is deprived of truth, a lasting madness or a passing illness' (199/220). The form of consciousness that is completely absorbed in the element of externality is incapable of bringing home the content of its representations. In order to incorporate these contents into the infinite space of ideality, consciousness must at least be able to identify them by means of language:

It is only in the name that intuition, [that is,] animalism, and time and space, have been truly overcome.<sup>41</sup>

What actualizes itself in the name is the positing as ideal of empirical intuition. The name itself, however, is an as yet particular ideality; the negative unity of consciousness must [therefore] relate these idealities to one another..., sublata the particularity of their content and arrest them as related to concepts of the understanding. (Jen I, 203/223)

In order to incorporate the contents of its representations into the infinite space of ideality, consciousness must be in the possession of language. In order to determine the contents of given representations in an objective manner, moreover, this language must rely on pure concepts. Whereas the distinction between time and ego first emerges in the perceiving animal, it is only in self-conscious human beings that the concept reaches the point at which it 'passes over' to the sphere of pure thought so as to unfold the totality of its determinations within this element (cf. D 111/170). Since this later unfolding exceeds the limit of a philosophy of nature, it will be discussed in the next chapter.

## 8. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that Hegel's early philosophy of nature seeks to comprehend the continuity between nature and spirit by locating the emergence of the subjective forms of externality – space and time – in the animal. As we have seen, the *Jena System Drafts* contain two complementary accounts of time, both of which implicitly draw on Kant's transcendental conception of space and time. First, Hegel follows Kant by treating space and time as *conditions of possibility of both experience and the objects of experience*. Insofar as he considers space and time in this respect, he treats them at the beginning of his philosophy of nature. Abstracting from what he sees as Kant's merely subjective determination of space and time, however, Hegel here conceives of space and time as forms of externality constitutive of the idea of nature as such. He also moves beyond Kant by tracing back space and time to their 'common root', that is, to the concept of aether and, ultimately, to the concept as such. Second, Hegel follows Kant's conception of space and time by locating them, qua conditions of possibility of experience, *in human self-consciousness*. Insofar as Hegel considers space and time in this respect, he treats them at the end of his philosophy of nature. However, Hegel does not accept the opposition between nature and thought he attributes to Kant, but seeks to comprehend the emergence

of human thought out of nature. That is why he attributes space and time not merely to the realm of human consciousness, but – following Schelling – also to the idea of nature such as it emerges if we *abstract* from the subjective dimension of knowledge.

I argued in the previous chapter that Hegel's speculative system resolves the opposition between concept and time by considering time to result from the concept's attempt to establish itself as concept. Although the *Logic* necessarily abstracts from the turning point achieved in the animal, it presupposes, I claimed, that the concept opens up the realm of pure thought by positing space and time over against itself. It has now become clear, I hope, that Hegel considers this movement actually to begin in the animal's attempt to disentangle its faculty of perception from the sequence of perceptions we call time. Hegel's early philosophy of nature thus supports my view that the concepts which allow thought to turn its representations into objects of knowledge develop nowhere else than in the history of human thought. In other words, whereas the system must begin with the *Logic*, the determinations of thought it reconstructs actually presuppose the sphere of nature.

Insofar as the animal succeeds in interiorizing the forms of externality, its faculty of perception turns into human consciousness, which, in its turn, becomes 'master of time' by subjugating its subsequent perceptions to concepts (Jen III, 171/86). Yet the disentanglement of absolute negativity and abstract negativity that, according to Hegel, begins to occur in the animal does not entail, I hold, that the ensuing realm of world history is defined by the sway of absolute negativity alone. Whereas Hegel could not have elaborated his speculative system without adopting this negativity as its unique principle, world history itself testifies to irresolvable conflicts as much as to attempts at self-determination. The second *Jena System Draft* maintains that time is 'driven back into the boundaries of the night' as soon as spirit begins to actualize itself (Jen II, 218). Yet it may well be that the self-actualization of spirit is not just thwarted by the element of temporal exteriority, but also, and more radically, by a mode of negativity that generates tragic conflicts, but not necessarily their resolution.

# 7

## Language

### 1. Introduction

It was argued in the preceding chapters that the unfolding of the concept which is reconstructed in the *Logic* presupposes its disentanglement from the pure forms of externality. It is only by dint of this separation, I suggested, that human beings can assign their impressions to objects posited over against themselves, thus turning these impressions into representations. The *Jena System Drafts* clearly state that this process can only occur through language.<sup>1</sup> Since there is, for Hegel, no thought without language, we cannot move from Hegel's philosophy of nature to his philosophy of human culture without examining this topic. According to the *Phenomenology*, language is 'the perfect element, in which interiority is just as external as externality is internal' (Phen 473/439). Although it does not make sense, in Hegel's view, to imagine a thought completely shorn of linguistic exteriority, he, on the other hand, takes care not to collapse thought and language. Thus, the *Logic* emphasizes that

[t]he forms of thought are initially displayed and stored in human *language*. . . . Into all that becomes something inward for men, an image or conception as such, into all that he makes his own, language has penetrated, and everything that he has transformed into language and expresses in it contains a category – concealed, mixed with other forms or clearly determined as such.<sup>2</sup>

For Hegel, every effort of thought to transform its transient impressions into stable representations occurs within the element of language. Yet the concepts required to achieve this transformation are 'contained' in



language in such a way that they are not contaminated by the arbitrariness proper to linguistic signs.<sup>3</sup> Now twentieth century philosophy has largely adhered to the view that language does not just express thoughts, but rather determines what can be thought at all. Seen from this perspective, classical philosophical systems such as Hegel's can easily be criticized for letting pure thought prevail over language. It is certainly true that Hegel preserves a distinction between thought and language. Yet his conception of language is, in my view, less susceptible to criticism inspired by the linguistic turn than one might think. Thus, Hegel complicates the opposition between thought and language by suggesting, in the *Encyclopedia*, that grammar is itself produced by the understanding, albeit not by the mode of understanding that performs actual judgments (Enc III, § 459 rem.). However, this chapter is not concerned with defending the primacy of either language or thought. It rather aims to show that Hegel's dialectical determination of the relation between thought and language fails to account for their irresolvable entanglement. This entanglement will be considered to precede the effort of pure thought to establish itself as the absolute principle of both thought and language.

Although Hegel repeatedly claims that language pervades every possible representation, and that language itself is always pervaded by pure forms of thought, he never elaborated an encompassing account of language as such.<sup>4</sup> The *Phenomenology* recalls several times that language constitutes the actual existence of spirit.<sup>5</sup> However, the scope of this work apparently does not permit of treating language in any systematic way. The *Encyclopedia*, for its part, only considers the psychological aspects of language, focusing on the relation of language to imagination and recollection (Enc III, § 459). Clearly, this discussion does not suffice to comprehend language as the necessary element of thought as such. The most extensive analysis of discursive thought, on the other hand, is offered in the final part of the *Science of Logic*. The first section of the *Doctrine of the Concept* investigates the various kinds of concepts, judgments and syllogisms that allow thought to determine its objects. In this whole section Hegel only once refers to language, merely stating that language is better able to grasp the totality of conceptual determinations than numerical relationships are (L II, 295/618).

Thus, whereas the account of language in the *Encyclopedia* is one-sidedly devoted to the psychological moment of language, the account of discursive thought in the *Logic* is one-sidedly devoted to its non-linguistic formal structures (cf. 400/702–03). In my view, neither of these accounts suffices to clarify Hegel's dialectical conception of the

relation between thought and language. The bones of formal thought and the flesh of natural language are what they are, Hegel notes in the *Logic*, by virtue of the 'original word' which first breathed life into them.<sup>6</sup> In what follows I will draw out the implications of this concept by means of two complementary perspectives. The first perspective sets out from the result of the previous chapter by addressing Hegel's view on the actual emergence of language. The second perspective, on the other hand, concerns the mode of thought that purports to be completely exempt from linguistic contingency, that is, philosophical thought itself. I will address these issues mainly by considering passages from *Reason in History* and the *Science of Logic*.

## 2. The Immemorial Advent of Language

Hegel notes in his first *Jena System Draft* that human spirit, insofar as it is sentient, belongs to the animal realm (Jen I, 205/225). Yet whereas animals are to a large extent delivered to their immediate perceptions, human consciousness posits itself over against the beings it encounters. By designating these beings by means of arbitrary sounds, it distinguishes between their accidental and their essential existence. Only this latter mode of existence belongs to the realm of universality and is, therefore, of the same kind as human spirit itself:

Thus, it is through the name that the object is born out of the I as *being*. This is the first *creating* force that spirit exerts. Adam gave a name to all things. This is... the first appropriation of nature as a whole, or its creation by spirit... Spirit relates to itself; it says to the donkey: you are something internal [*ein Innres*] and this interiority am I, and your being is a sound that I have arbitrarily invented. Donkey is a sound, which is something entirely different from the sensible being itself.<sup>7</sup>

As soon as someone calls a donkey a donkey, the ideal, as a flash of lightning, strikes the real, to use Schelling's words (D 111/170). Yet Hegel does not pause to reflect on the actual emergence of language in properly philosophical terms. Neither the *Jena Drafts*, the *Phenomenology*, nor the *Encyclopedia* offer a philosophical account of the transition from the uttering of sounds by animals to human language.

One would have expected Hegel to dwell on this transition at least in *Reason in History*. However, Hegel contends in this lecture series that the advent of language itself cannot be the object of speculative science

(RH 162/134). History, he holds here, can only be grasped when the first enlightenment of the world has resulted in the development of states. The emergence of language which precedes this development merely *prepares* the true history of spirit and for that reason does not belong to world history proper. At a time when spirit had hardly begun to organize itself, people somehow must somewhere have begun to speak. But at that time they had not yet found the means to preserve their thoughts in writings:

Since such conditions must be fulfilled before history is possible, it has happened that so rich and immeasurable an enterprise as the growth of families into tribes and of tribes into nations ... has taken place without giving rise to history; and what is more, that the concomitant expansion and development of the realm of spoken sounds has itself remained dumb, and has taken place in a silent and stealthy manner. (166/137)

Language is the activity of theoretical intelligence in the proper sense, for language is the external expression [*die äusserliche Äusserung*] of the latter. ... But this theoretical act as such, as well as its further development and the more concrete process of the dissemination of peoples ... connected to it, remains buried in the obscurity of a voiceless past; these are not acts of a will becoming conscious of itself. (166/137)

Language, to which Hegel also refers as 'the inorganic existence of spirit' (162/134), seems to belong to a twilight zone between nature and spirit that defies the threefold structure of the speculative system. It may well be the first product of 'theoretical intelligence in the proper sense', but speculative science has no means to grasp its immemorial origin. Contrary to Rousseau, Herder, and others, Hegel refuses to speculate about the origin of language.

But if language is the primordial way in which an as yet inorganic spirit organizes itself, should thought not attempt to reflect on this pivotal moment itself? Contrary to the conclusion one might be tempted to draw, Hegel's reticence with respect to the prehistory of spirit is fully in accordance with the basic principle of speculative science. For this science seeks to reconstruct as far as possible what is 'logical' in thought as such, nature and history, in other words, what manifests one way or another the absolute principle of self-determination. Not everything

can or should be regarded as expressive of this principle. As we saw in Chapter 5.4, Hegel has no difficulty whatsoever in acknowledging that nature is largely handed over to chance. Thus, he notes in the *Encyclopedia* that nature lacks the power to determine the particular features of its products from within. This 'impotence of nature' imposes an insurmountable limit on both philosophy and science (Enc II, § 250). Contingency occurs in the realm of spirit as well, and not merely insofar as particular historical events are concerned. The particular features of languages, laws, and works of art, Hegel notes, also result from chance rather than rationality:

With regard to spirit and its activity one must likewise resist the temptation, proper to a well-meant search for rational knowledge, to exhibit the necessity of phenomena that are characterized by a decided contingency. . . . Thus in language (although it be, as it were, the body of thought) chance unquestionably plays a definite part; and the same is true of the creation of laws, art, etcetera.<sup>8</sup>

Yet no one would maintain that the advent of language as such is on a par with the whims of nature or the contingent features of a particular language. Since language is, according to Hegel, the primordial product of theoretical intelligence, its emergence must, in the end, be conceived as resulting from the movement in which the pure concept actualizes itself. As we saw above, however, Hegel takes care to distinguish this primordial product of reason from acts accomplished by a self-conscious will, such as the establishment of laws, religion, art, and science. Apparently, the emergence of language as such is neither rational in the sense of conscious acts nor contingent in the sense of the particular traits of animals, laws, or languages. Speculative science, then, can do no more than indicate that language constitutes the hinge between nature and spirit and hence a necessary condition of possibility of the history of spirit.

In Hegel's view, language is both a product of reason and a necessary condition of self-conscious thought. Now this is also true of the pure concepts that he claims are somehow contained in all natural languages. Yet contrary to the archaic advent of language, the movement in which the concept as such unfolds the totality of its immanent determinations *has* left its traces on the actual history of thought. Moreover, since this movement exhibits a certain logic, there is no reason why it cannot become the object of speculative science. The gradual unfolding of the pure concepts which has animated the history of thought could

not have occurred without language. Yet the concept as such constitutes, so to speak, the organic nature of thought, feeding on its inorganic counterpart without letting its self-actualization be determined by the contingency proper to the latter. Language itself, according to Hegel, has no history to speak of. Even his account of the pure concepts that have shaped the actual history of thought hardly refers to the intricate relation between the unfolding of the pure concepts and the advent of language. Hegel does not seem to be interested in laying bare something like the 'common root' of thought and language. Nor would he accept that thought and language are entangled to such an extent that neither of them is necessarily capable of reducing the other to the means of its self-actualization. But perhaps the term 'original word', which occurs near the end of the *Logic*, points in a different direction.

### 3. The Original Word

Hegel, as we have seen, distinguishes between thought and language by conceiving of language as the means which allows thought to actualize itself. More precisely, language on the one hand allows consciousness to transform its immediate impressions into representations and hence to become independent of the actual sequence of these impressions. In this respect, language can be said to bring about the opposition between subject and object. On the other hand, language also allows pure thought gradually to unfold the totality of pure concepts which allow us to transform our empirical representations into objective knowledge. These concepts themselves precede the opposition between subject and object. The remarks on language discussed so far, however, leave open whether pure concepts – and hence the philosophy that comprehends their necessary sequence – are as dependent on language as empirical concepts are.

We can only have definite thoughts, Hegel notes in the *Encyclopedia*, by letting them take shape in the element of linguistic exteriority. Language is distinguished from bronze or paint in that sounds occur in time and, moreover, in that they do not attract our attention once we have learned a language. Although external to thought, linguistic exteriority does not offer the kind of resistance proper to the realm of material things. According to the *Encyclopedia*, this exteriority

bears the stamp of the highest interiority. Only the articulated tone, the word, is such an inner externality [*ein so innerliches Äusserliches*]. (Enc III, § 462 add.)

The *Logic* pertains not only to pure concepts 'which are singled out by reflection and are fixed by it as subjective forms', but also to 'the determinations of thought which pervade our mind instinctively and unconsciously – and which even when they enter the language do not become objects of our attention' (L I, 30/39). Thus, we need not be aware of the fact that a simple judgment such as 'this donkey is gray' relies on pure concepts such as being, quality, something, being-for-itself, and substance. The *Logic*, as we have seen, considers the concept of being to be the first result of the self-determining activity exerted by the concept as such. In this sense, the concept of being underlies every judgment about appearances. This concept itself, however, may remain hidden in natural languages until, at some point, someone determines 'being' as the absolute principle of both knowledge and that which can be known.<sup>9</sup> Although pure concepts can only be grasped insofar as they have somehow 'entered the language', the *Logic* abstracts to the largest possible extent from their linguistic embedment.

According to Hegel, every language is permeated by purely conceptual determinations. Yet the ultimate element of these determinations is pure thought itself. Near the end of the *Logic* Hegel comprehends the unfolding of the concept *in the element of pure thought itself* as a mode of self-externalization:

That is why the *Logic* exhibits the self-movement of the absolute idea only as the original *word*, which is an externalization or expression [*Äusserung*], but an externalization which is such that it, as something external [*als Äusseres*], has immediately vanished again when it comes into being; the idea is, therefore, only in this self-determination of *apprehending itself*; it is in *pure thought*, in which difference is not yet *otherness*, but is and remains perfectly transparent to itself. (L II, 550/825)

Intimating the gospel of John, this passage refers to the difference between, on the one hand, the self-actualization of the concept in the element of pure thought (as the logical idea) and, on the other hand, the self-actualization of the concept in the element of externality (as the ideas of nature and spirit). Contrary to the ideas of nature and spirit, the logical idea remains enclosed within the element of pure thought itself. It 'expresses' the totality of its immanent determinations by distinguishing itself from itself, but this its self-expression is not of the same kind as the expression of the concept in the element of externality. Contrary to a concept such as becoming, a concept such as matter

refers to a moment of nature that is not itself completely conceptual.<sup>10</sup> This is even more the case with empirical concepts such as the concept of donkey. The *Logic* pertains, in other words, to a *logos* that has not yet become flesh.<sup>11</sup>

This notwithstanding, Hegel considers both the externalization of the concept in the element of pure thought and the externalization of thought in the element of language to annul their exteriority as soon as it has been brought about. The concept as such does not become different from itself while it manifests itself as 'being', 'substance', or 'infinity'. Such concepts constitute, in principle, transparent determinations of the concept as such, even though they have not always been recognized as such. These particular concepts, in turn, do not become different from what they are in themselves when expressed in a specific language.<sup>12</sup> This is, in Hegel's view, also true of empirical concepts. Thus, Hegel conceives of both pure thought itself and language as allowing thought to exteriorize itself without loss. Whereas contingency plays no part at all in the first case, it does not seem to influence the content of representations in the second.

Yet the fact that Hegel refers in similar terms to the exteriorization of thought in the element of thought itself and in the element of language might be considered to destabilize his dialectical determination of the relation between thought and language. The exteriorization of thought, he suggests, has always already begun and cannot be attributed to the realm of language alone. Hegel avoids the possible consequences of this insight, however, by arguing that neither exteriorization disturbs the capacity of thought to produce determinate concepts. Whether conceptual determination occurs from within or from without, it occurs independently of the inner exteriority proper to linguistic signs. Even though Hegel uses the term 'original word' to refer to the concept as such, this word is distinguished from language in an essential way: it must translate itself into the element of exteriority in order to unfold its immanent determinations, but this its 'linguistic turn' does not infringe upon its innermost content.

#### 4. The Interpenetration of Language and Thought

Despite the suggestive force of terms such as 'original word' and 'inner exteriority', Hegel clearly conceives of the relation between thought and language as an asymmetrical relation. This also emerges from a remark in the *Logic* to which I referred in the introduction. Hegel here notes, on the one hand, that language 'has penetrated' into all representations

and, on the other, that language itself always 'contains' categories (L I, 20/31). This means that the relation between language and empirical concepts, as he sees it, is not identical to that between language and pure concepts. Representations of inner states, external objects, and events must be penetrated by language in order to acquire a definite content. Pure concepts, by contrast, are not themselves penetrated by language, but are rather *contained* in language as the necessary conditions of possibility of representation as such. Language, for its part, does not infringe upon the concepts it contains within itself.

In order to bring out the limit of Hegel's dialectical determination of the relation between thought and language it may seem tempting to argue that Hegel's reference to the exteriorization of thought collapses the difference between thought and language. Seen in this way, there would be no outside to language. Yet instead of overturning Hegel's account by raising language, externality, or contingency into the absolute principle of thought, I propose to reconsider the moment at which neither thought nor language have as yet established themselves as the absolute principle of their contrary moments.

As we have seen, Hegel neither in *Reason in History* nor in the *Logic* reflects upon the common prehistory of thought and language. For Hegel, the history of pure thought begins at the moment that the concept of being is posited as the absolute principle of thought. The ensuing self-externalization of the concept in the element of pure thought exhibits a certain necessity and, for that reason, can become the object of speculative science. During the prehistoric development of language, by contrast, thought only permeated language in the form of grammar. Thus, grammar preceded the externalization of pure thought in the element of thought itself in the same way as the archaic determination of justice preceded, according to the *Essay on Natural Law*, the rational determination of justice in Greek ethical life. Yet although language, constituting the inorganic nature of thought, may have been the first to have entered the scene of world history, it cannot, according to Hegel, constitute its ultimate principle.

Hegel is certainly right when he notes that the linguistic prehistory of thought falls outside the scope of philosophical knowledge. This does not imply, however, that the relation between thought and language is not worthy of philosophical reflection at all. Such a reflection might open out onto a precondition of pure thought that pure thought itself cannot completely retrieve. As I noted above, I do not wish to contend that purely conceptual determinations are necessarily dependent on a pre-existing, contingent grammar. Instead, I propose to consider



the alleged primacy of thought over language as resulting from the attempt of thought to define its contrary as exterior to its proper interiority. On this view, thought can only establish itself as pure thought by expelling its contrary from itself and, hence, by reducing it to the harmless means of its self-actualization. By applying the logic of entanglement to the relation between thought and language, it can be argued that pure thought could only bring about its self-transparent interiority by disentangling itself from the inner exteriority proper to language, relegating the contingency of the latter to the linguistic signs of which it consists. Whereas for Hegel, as we have seen, pure concepts are contained in language without being penetrated by it, nothing prevents us from arguing that language initially penetrated these concepts as much as these concepts penetrated language. This moment might be regarded as preceding the effort of pure thought to efface the traces of this initial interpenetration and to establish itself as the absolute principle of both thought and language. If this moment is conceived as an essential precondition of thought, then the history of philosophy is the history of the effacement of this precondition.

Hegel, I have argued, considers pure thought to unfold the totality of its determinations in the history of thought, and the *Logic* to reconstruct this unfolding. I do not wish to contend that pure thought *failed* to disentangle itself from the realm of language. Nor do I wish to suggest that the history of philosophy could have developed in any other way. It is by dint of this disentanglement that pure thought has been able to create the concepts that allow us to transform impressions into representations and representations into objective knowledge. This does not entail, however, that philosophy has always succeeded in annulling the objectifying tendency that seems to inhere in language as such.<sup>13</sup> After all, words are meant primarily to identify donkeys as donkeys. Opposing the realm of language, philosophy, it seems to me, continues to depend on this objectifying moment as much as any other mode of thought. Irreducible to the realm of linguistic signs, this moment seems to threaten the plasticity of philosophy wherever it goes. That is why the works of Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and many others testify to the infinite struggle of philosophy against the hypostatization of its concepts.

No subject matter, Hegel holds, 'is so absolutely capable of being expounded with a strictly immanent plasticity as is the necessary development of thought' (L I, 30/40). According to the *Phenomenology*, a speculative exposition does not express its object by means of propositions that connect a subject to a single predicate, but rather by exposing an immediate content, its one-sidedness, and the one-sidedness of its

contrary. For Hegel, only a movement characterized by absolute negativity, which may take a single sentence or many pages, can do justice to this immanent movement of thought.<sup>14</sup> Hegel will always, and rightly so, distinguish the fluidity of speculative thought from the petrifying tendency of the understanding. Translating the original word – its innermost exteriority – into the absolute negativity at work in thought, nature, and history, speculative science owes its self-transparency to this very translation. It is not self-evident, however, that this fluidity must be conceived in terms of absolute negativity alone.

# 8

## Teleology

### 1. Introduction

Hegel's philosophy of world history, he notes in *Reason in History*, relies on the idea 'that reason governs the world, and that world history is therefore a rational process' (RH 28/27). In order to comprehend the significance – and hence the limit – of this assumption, this chapter investigates Hegel's treatment of the concept of teleology in the final part of the *Logic*. So far I have examined the *Logic* by focusing on sections of the *Doctrine of Being* and the *Doctrine of Essence*. The *Doctrine of the Concept* differs from the preceding parts, I argued, by treating pure concepts which have already been conceived as the unity of their contrary determinations in the history of philosophy itself. Thus, the concept of life implies that the animating principle of a living organism and its external manifestation have resolved their purported independence. This also obtains of the concept constitutive of a teleological perspective on the world. For if we interpret natural, technical, or historical events in terms of the actualization of ends we imply, according to Hegel, that end and means constitute contrary moments of the same movement. Seen in this way, the relation between end and means – to which Hegel refers as the end-relation (L II, 437/735) – clearly exhibits the dynamic of the concept as such, that is, the movement in which something opposes its contrary moments so as to resolve their opposition.

Hegel's philosophy of world history deliberately relies on the conception of the end-relation put forward in the *Logic*. In this regard, the latter can be said to pre-eminently bridge the gap between the realms of pure thought and actual world history. Whereas time, as was argued in Chapter 5, opens up the element of externality as such, the end-relation pertains to the concept's actualization – qua reason – in this

latter element. Time and the end-relation might therefore be regarded as the warp and weft of world history. However, Hegel's account of world history is not teleological in any classical sense of the term. The section of the *Doctrine of the Concept* entitled *Teleology* rather reflects on the pure concept which informs classical conceptions of teleology such as Aristotle's and Kant's. This reflection aims to bring out that each of them conceived of this concept in a one-sided manner.<sup>1</sup> Since the concept of the end-relation cannot be identified with its limited determinations in the history of philosophy, it is, in my view, less easy to criticize Hegel's conception of world history than it may seem.

Because the concept of the end-relation approximates the mode of the concept that constitutes the principle of speculative science itself, it is particularly appropriate to clarify the basic thrust of this science. For the same reason, it lends itself particularly well to argue that Hegel's speculative science rests on a determination of the conflict between contrary determinations that effaces their mutual entanglement. The concept of the end-relation elaborated in the *Logic* is, in the end, nothing but a specific guise of absolute negativity. In order to argue that this negativity alone does not allow us adequately to comprehend the conflicts occurring within the element of world history, this chapter challenges not so much Hegel's conception of teleology itself as the mode of negativity on which it relies. On Hegel's account, the end-relation differs from the concept as such because the end in most cases depends on an externality not produced by itself. Whereas Hegel seeks to reduce this externality to a moment of the end-relation, I will argue that the end is from the outset entangled with an externality that threatens its self-actualization from within rather than from without. On this view, the conflict between end and means effaces the effort of the end to establish itself *as* end in the first place and, accordingly, its contrary *as* a mode of externality that cannot thwart its self-actualization.

It should be noted that the section of the *Logic* devoted to teleology is particularly abstruse. In order to lay bare the underlying principle of teleological conceptions of life, human action, and world history as such, Hegel largely abstracts both from its different determinations in the history of philosophy and from actual purposive processes or acts. For the sake of clarification I will therefore add some concrete examples. This chapter begins by examining Hegel's account of external and internal purposiveness, then turns to his discussion of moral ends, and finally addresses the tragic negativity that is covered over by Hegel's dialectical conception of the end-relation.

## 2. The End-Relation

Hegel discusses the end-relation in the second part of the *Doctrine of the Concept*. As he sees it, the concept that concerns the actualization of ends is one of the ways in which philosophy has articulated the self-determining activity at work in the realms of nature and finite spirit. Wherever forms of nature and spirit display a unity that does not rest on external causality alone, they testify, according to Hegel, to the attempt of something at determining itself by positing and resolving the opposition of its contrary moments, that is to say, to the concept as such. In nature, this self-determining activity manifests itself as the animating principle of every single living being. Life, Hegel notes, is

the concept which, distinguished from its objectivity, pervades its objectivity simply from within and, as end in itself, possesses its means in this objectivity and posits the latter as its means. Yet it is immanent in this means and is therein the realized self-identical end. (L II, 468/760)

Every single part of an organism serves the purpose of preserving both the organism itself and its species. All parts of the organism are mutually dependent. The external form of the organism constitutes the means whereby life as such actualizes itself in concrete living beings. In this case, the means is not opposed to the end of the organism, but rather constitutes the proper externalization of its specific animating principle. Thus, life constitutes a mode of the concept in which the concept, determined as end, itself produces the means of its actualization.

In line with Kant, the *Logic* distinguishes between external and internal purposiveness.<sup>2</sup> The largest part of Hegel's analysis is devoted to external purposiveness, that is, to ends that are dependent on an externality foreign to them (444/739–40). Whereas internal purposiveness characterizes the self-organization of living beings, external purposiveness characterizes the way in which human beings realize particular ends. Hegel refers in this regard to the use of tools such as a plough.<sup>3</sup> Since the *Logic* restricts itself to the realm of pure concepts, however, it cannot really deal with such concrete cases. The *Logic* is exclusively concerned with the conceptual determination that underlies all processes in which ends are realized, that is, with the end-relation as such. This conceptual determination manifests itself inadequately in external purposiveness and adequately in the internal purposiveness proper to living

beings. As far as its role in the *Logic* itself is concerned, the principle of purposiveness reaches its proper end in this latter determination. This implies, according to Hegel, that it must dissolve into a less one-sided determination of the concept as such, namely, in the idea of life. Life, in other words, cannot be adequately explained in terms of the end-relation alone, even though the latter manifests itself primarily in living beings.

### 3. External Purposiveness

In order to exhibit the logical principle of purposive processes, Hegel begins by considering the way in which human beings realize determinate ends. However, he completely abstracts from the perspective of the acting subject so as to examine the implications of the concept 'end' as such. This abstraction allows him to distinguish the following moments of external purposiveness. If an end is to actualize itself, it must in the first place determine itself, that is, acquire a particular content (446/741–42). By thus determining itself, the end can be considered to distinguish between its general form (it is an end) and a content that is in some way external to this form, for the specific content of an end is not implied in the concept of an end as such. This concrete content of the end constitutes, as Hegel puts it, the 'self-determination' of the end (460/753). Although this content precedes the externalization of the end in the realm of objectivity, it is not completely immanent to the end itself. Hegel therefore conceives of this content as 'the original inner externality of the concept' (460/752), an expression he also uses, as we saw in the previous chapter, with regard to language. The architect who sets himself the aim of building a house must begin by determining the specific properties of the particular house he wishes to build, and the person who wishes to do good must begin by determining what is in each particular case the best thing to do. This self-determination of the end implies that it distinguishes its content – the moment of particularity – from its form – the moment of universality. The content it thus acquires is finite insofar as it excludes other possible contents. The *form* of the end, however, remains from beginning to end the infinite principle of self-actualization (446–47/742).

An end is finite, according to Hegel, not only because it is distinguished from other possible determinate ends, but also because it is opposed to the realm of objectivity. The movement in which the end determines its own content implies that it opposes itself to an objectivity as yet indifferent to it. Only when the architect has completed his

building plans do the materials required to build the house acquire the significance of an externality not yet pervaded by the end. And only when someone has a determinate end in view can he or she set out to annul the distinction between the end and the objectivity opposed to it:

[I]n the same moment in which the subject of the end determines *itself*, it is related to an indifferent, external objectivity, which is to be equated by it with the said inner determination. (448/742, cf. 449/743)

The person who builds a house or wishes to do good relates to a reality that has not yet – or not sufficiently – been pervaded by this end. Moreover, persons who wish to do good are themselves also concrete living beings not necessarily pervaded by the good. Yet although passions, for instance, are in themselves indifferent to the content of the ends we pursue, they can be transformed into the means whereby the good is actualized in the world. Similarly, a state that aims to enhance the well-being of the community should recognize that citizens pursuing their own ends contribute to the end of the state as such.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4. The Means

Hegel conceives of an end not so much as a static final cause, but rather as something that seeks to overcome its one-sided interiority from within. The first way in which the end narrows the gap between itself and the indifferent objectivity opposed to it consists in transforming this objectivity into a means:

The end unites itself through a means with objectivity, and in objectivity with itself. . . . The end, because it is finite, requires a means for its realization – a means . . . that at the same time has the shape of an *external* existence indifferent to the end itself. (448/743)

An end is finite insofar as it depends on means to actualize itself, means that are, at least to a certain extent, indifferent to the end for which they may be used. A stone is indifferent to its being used to build a house or to knock down someone. Yet *insofar* as something is determined as means, it relinquishes its independence and lends itself to the actualization of the end. Seen from Hegel's perspective, it is the end itself that determines something as the means of its actualization. By doing so, it

reduces the means to a moment of itself, namely, to the moment that it must posit over against itself in order to actualize itself through it.

Now Hegel considers both contrary moments to contain the totality of these moments within themselves, even when they have not actualized this totality. Although both end and means constitute in themselves the same totality, this totality is in each case determined differently:

The means is an object, *in itself* the totality of the concept; it has no power of resistance against the end, as it has in the first instance against another immediate object. The means is therefore absolutely penetrable by the end... and receptive of its communication, for it is *in itself* identical with it. (450/745)

Insofar as objects have not been determined as means they may well resist the force imposed on them by other objects. Yet the concept of a means implies that an object *qua* means is subordinated to the end. Since the end, as Hegel remarks, is the soul of the means (451/745), the means does not seem to possess a principle of its own.

It does not follow from this, however, that an object determined as means has completely been rid of the independence that belongs to it *qua* object. For otherwise it would be incomprehensible why human beings must struggle against their desires in order to do good, or why the artist needs craft in order to let the chisel comply with his will and the stone with the chisel. When an end transforms something into a means, the latter is raised into a higher realm than that of mere objects. Yet the thing that is determined as a means 'has also a side according to which it retains its independence of the end' (451/745). The means, in other words, is not completely pervaded by its determination as means. That is why the end attempts to annul the purported independence of the means, or its resistance, to the highest possible extent (451/745). Since the effort of the end to transform an object into a compliant means is to some extent external to the end itself, this involves a certain violence (452/746).

However, the activity of the end consists not merely in the transformation of an object into an appropriate means. The ultimate end of the end itself, so to speak, is its actualization in the realm of objectivity (451/745). In order to actualize itself in this realm, the end must deploy the means, in its turn, to transform the objectivity opposed to it. The end thus interposes a certain object – the means – between itself and



the object in which it seeks to actualize itself (452/746). Hiding itself behind the means, the end itself does not expose itself to the violence inherent in the realm of external objects. Even if the house that is being built differs dramatically from the original plan, the plan itself remains unscathed. The end, Hegel notes,

puts forward [*stellt hinaus*] an object as means, lets it wear itself out externally in its stead, abandons it to attrition and, shielding behind it, preserves itself against mechanical violence. (453/747)

The end should therefore be able to preserve its inner determination – its initial content – even though the means which, for instance, are used by the architect, resist the latter's intentions. According to Hegel, in other words, the end itself does not allow the mechanical means, on which it depends to actualize itself, to infringe upon its immanent content (453/747). In a similar way, a seed is dependent on external circumstances such as water and sunshine to develop into a tree. Yet these circumstances do not have the power to determine whether this seed develops into an oak tree or a beech.

## 5. Internal Purposiveness

Insofar as the realm of external purposiveness is concerned, ends depend on objects that they have determined as means, but have not produced themselves. Both these means and the objects in which such ends actualize themselves, such as houses, are as much as all other objects handed over to transience (457/750). Although the inner content of the end itself – its inner exteriority – is exempt from the transience proper to material objects, it must exteriorize itself in such objects to come into its own. Hegel's account of external purposiveness has made it clear that this mode of purposiveness does not yet adequately exhibit the self-determining activity of the concept as such. For Hegel, the essence of the external end-relation, or, as he puts it, its truth, consists in the internal end-relation (458/751). In this latter relation the means has no independence whatsoever of the end, and the end, for its part, need not use violence to subjugate the means to itself:

The externality of the object...here constitutes a presupposition that the end has brought about itself [*welche der Zweck sich voraussetzt*].... Accordingly,... the subjective end requires to use no

violence against the object, no reinforcement against it other than the reinforcing of itself; the resolve [*Entschluss*], the explication [*Aufschluss*], this determination of itself, is the *merely posited* externality of the object, which therein is immediately subjected to the end and possesses no other determination against it than that of the nullity of its being-in-and-for-itself. (458/751)

Although Hegel does not specify which processes are characterized by this internal purposiveness, he seems to have in mind the kind of purposiveness proper to living beings. For the animating principle of an organism actualizes itself by means of its corporeal externality in such a way that the latter – as long as it is alive – is in no way indifferent to it. An organism has no other end than the preservation of itself and the species. Since the end of the organism is the organism itself, its body constitutes a means that does not become superfluous once the end has actualized itself. Neither needs its animating principle to use violence to subordinate the parts of an organism to itself, that is, to the organism as a whole; the organism is means and end at once. This is to say that we can only adequately comprehend living beings by means of an ontological perspective based on the principle of end-in-itself. Insofar as this principle applies to individual organisms, it might also be referred to as ‘life’ (468/760). At this level, however, the concept must still distinguish itself into, on the one hand, an individual organism and, on the other, the inorganic nature that constitutes its contrary moment (473/764). Insofar as organisms remain dependent on means they have not produced themselves – such as food – they presuppose a realm of objects that do not necessarily let themselves be transformed into means. The relation between an organism and the inorganic nature which it attempts to determine as means is therefore marked by external rather than internal purposiveness (cf. 468/760).

If, however, the principle of internal purposiveness is no longer applied to finite organisms, but rather to the world as such, this finitude no longer obtains.<sup>5</sup> If the world is conceived from the perspective of inner purposiveness it no longer makes sense to distinguish between an immanent end and an indifferent externality that it must presuppose. In this case, Hegel notes, the concept as such

contains mediation in such a manner that its first positing [*Setzen*] is not a presupposing [*ein Voraussetzen*] whose object would be essentially determined by indifferent externality; on the contrary, the

world as creation has *merely the form of such externality*, but is essentially determined by its negativity and its being-posited [*Gesetzsein*].<sup>6</sup>

Seen from the perspective of purposiveness, the world as such emerges as an infinite organism, that is, as a self-contained totality which, presupposing nothing, creates the means of its self-actualization out of itself. Considered in this way, the ultimate end of the world first and foremost emerges as the good that seeks to actualize itself in the world. Thus, the concept of purposiveness can be applied to both finite beings and the world as such. Only in the latter case is the relation between end and means absolutely immanent. However, I would like to emphasize that Hegel, while analyzing the concept of the end-relation, does not necessarily identify the perspective of speculative science with the ontological perspective defined by inner purposiveness. With this in mind, we can turn to Hegel's account of the way in which philosophy has conceived of the end as such as the ultimate good.

## 6. The Ultimate End of the World

In accordance with the difference between external and internal purposiveness, the *Logic* distinguishes between a finite and an infinite determination of the world's ultimate end. Just as any other end, Hegel writes, the good as such is the urge

to posit its own determination and, by sublating the determinations of the external world, to give itself reality in the form of external actuality. (542–43/819)

Since the idea of the good is in itself a determination of the concept, it is an idea in the speculative sense of the term.<sup>7</sup> This means, for Hegel, that it does not depend on something outside itself to produce its own content.<sup>8</sup> Insofar as the good constitutes the ultimate aim of particular moral deeds, the contents it acquires are – just as those of any other end – necessarily finite. Yet whereas the content of the house to be built is finite through and through, the content of a moral end, though finite, at the same time possesses absolute validity (543/819–20). However, the *actualization* of moral ends is no less than that of houses dependent on means they have not brought about themselves. In this respect, moral deeds are just as much as other modes of acting determined by external

purposiveness (543/819). If the good is conceived as the principle of subjective moral ends, Hegel notes, then

notwithstanding its internal infinity it cannot escape the destiny of finitude – a destiny that manifests itself in a number of forms. (544/820)

This finitude concerns first and foremost the *actualization* of a moral end. Although Hegel endorses Kant's view that the intention of the acting person determines the moral character of his or her act, he emphasizes on the other hand that this intention must actualize itself in the element of externality.<sup>9</sup> Seen from the perspective of morality – and this is, for Hegel, the perspective of Kant – the element of externality poses a limit to the actualization of moral ends that can never completely be overcome. Since the moral end cannot completely subjugate this presupposed externality to its self-actualization, the contradiction between thought and externality remains unresolved (544/820). Hegel would agree with Kant that the moral deeds of individual human beings necessarily suffer from this contradiction. He seems to hold, however, that Kant unduly projected this subjective perspective on moral ends onto the ultimate end of the world as such:

With regard to the objective world, which constitutes the presupposition of the good insofar as the latter is subjective and finite, and which as a different world goes its own way [*ihren eigenen Gang geht*], the very realization of the good is handed over to obstacles and might even become impossible. Thus, the good remains that which ought to be [*ein Sollen*]. (544/820)

A world that is considered to depend on the element of externality in the same way as particular moral deeds does not necessarily comply with the realization of the good as such. Seen in this way, the ultimate end of the world does not create the world out of nothing, but rather presupposes a given world. This conception implies that the world as such might resist the realization of the good in a similar way as the means presupposed by a particular moral end.

According to the passage just quoted, the element of externality does not merely possess the power to thwart the actualization of the good, *but even threatens to make its actualization impossible*. This is a rather unexpected statement to come from a philosopher like Hegel. One should

not forget, however, that Hegel here implicitly identifies with Kant's position in order to comprehend its immanent limit.<sup>10</sup> Hegel, in other words, here treats the subjective perspective on morality articulated by Kant in the same way as he treated the Greek perspective on ethical life, articulated in tragedy, in the *Essay on Natural Law* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Although Kant is not mentioned, Hegel seems to consider Kant's moral perspective unduly to comprehend the world as such *in the same terms* as the world such as it manifests itself to a finite subject, for whom the world is foreign to the ends it seeks to realize. For a philosophy that takes its bearings from the subjective moral deed,

*the finitude* of the good ... appears as the abiding truth, and its actualization appears always as a merely *individual* act, and not as a *universal* one. (547/822)

To the extent that an end is finite, it depends on external means to actualize itself. Since objects determined as means are not completely shorn of the indifference proper to all material objects, these means, going their own way, may thwart the self-actualization of the end.

However, Hegel considers this logic to pertain to finite end-relations alone, that is to say, not to the concept that constitutes the true beginning and end of the realms of nature and spirit. If philosophy relies on an ontological perspective that is determined by the concept as such, it cannot but recognize, according to Hegel, that

the given actuality is at the same time determined as the realized absolute end, ... as an objective world whose inner ground and actual existence is the concept. (548/823)

Seen from this perspective, the actual world is not conceived as foreign to the ultimate end of the world, but as from the outset pervaded by it. It does not follow from this, however, that Hegel therefore considers the *good* to have already actualized itself in the world or even to be able to completely actualize itself. For the very idea of the good implies the distinction between an end and an actuality that is to some extent external to it. Since the idea of the good is precisely determined as that which cannot completely actualize itself, that is, as a mere postulate, it constitutes a limited, one-sided determination of the concept (L II, 544/820). Contrary to the idea of the good, the absolute principle of

self-determination which constitutes the inner ground of the objective world *has already* developed the totality of its immanent determinations in the elements of thought, nature, and history. Since the concept is not external to the realm of externality, its self-actualization in this realm cannot be corroded, Hegel suggests, by the indifference proper to the latter.<sup>11</sup>

In *Reason in History* Hegel maintains as well that the concept – now in its guise as reason – is the infinite power to actualize itself in the world:

Unlike finite deeds, [reason] does not require the conditions of external material, given means, from which to derive its sustenance and the objects of its activity.... Just as it is its own sole presupposition [*Voraussetzung*], and just as its end is the absolute ultimate end, so it is itself the actualization of this end and its outward manifestation – not merely in the realm of the natural universe, but also in the realm of spirit, that is, in world history. (RH 28–29/27–28)

To the extent that the concept manifests its immanent determinations in the element of externality, it depends on the pure forms of space and time. These forms can be considered to constitute the primary means of its self-externalization in nature and history. As I argued in Chapter 5, Hegel considers these forms themselves to result from the initial self-externalization of the concept. In order to unfold its immanent determinations in the realms of nature and spirit, the concept must allow the element of externality to acquire a certain degree of indifference. But since, according to Hegel, the concept *posits* rather than *presupposes* the forms constitutive of this element, it is necessarily capable of actualizing itself by means of these forms.

Hegel clearly conceives of the absolute self-externalization of the concept in terms of the inner purposiveness characteristic of individual living beings. Insofar as the concept is determined as life, he notes,

it pervades its objectivity and, as its own end, possesses its means in the objectivity and posits the latter as its means, yet is immanent in this means and is therein the realized end that is identical with itself.<sup>12</sup>

The means on which the animating principle of an organism depends to actualize itself are pervaded by this principle to such an extent that they cannot infringe upon this actualization. Since living beings are at the

same time always dependent on an externality foreign to them, however, the concept of life only applies to individual organisms. Insofar as the concept enacts itself, on the other hand, as the absolute principle of world history, that is, as reason, it is governed by an infinite mode of inner purposiveness. Since, in this case, it produces itself the means of its self-actualization, it cannot be threatened by their apparent indifference.

This notwithstanding, Hegel will have to account for the obstacles to the actualization of reason that actually do occur within the element of world history. In order to do this without lapsing back into the position of Kant, Hegel in *Reason in History* draws on the conception of external purposiveness elaborated in the *Logic*. As we saw above, Hegel here maintains that an external end must determine an object as its means and interpose the latter between itself and the object in which it seeks to actualize itself. By doing this, the end itself does not fall prey to the wear and tear that threatens the subsistence of material objects. Already in the *Logic* Hegel refers to this principle as the cunning of reason (L II, 746/452). By applying this principle to the realm of world history, Hegel can comprehend the particular interests that seem to determine historical events as means posited by reason itself:

For it is not the universal idea which enters into opposition, conflict, and danger; it keeps itself in the background, untouched and unharmed, and sends forth the particular interests of passions to fight and wear themselves out in its stead. It is what we may call the *cunning of reason* that it sets the passions to work in its service, such that the latter, through which it actualizes itself, must pay the penalty and suffer the loss. (RH 105/89)

Since nothing happens in the world without passion, reason must determine its contrary as passion, deliver it to the realm of external events, and actualize itself by means of it. This can only succeed if the relation between reason and passion is conceived as an asymmetrical one, that is, if reason posits the moment of passion over against itself in such a way that the latter, in the end, must yield to its sway. Due to the inner purposiveness of the concept as such, the means whereby reason actualizes itself in world history only *seem* to be external to reason itself and hence only *seem* to oppose its actualization. Seen in this way, the cunning of reason is nothing but a subordinate mode of the concept as such, a mode that presupposes the ontological distinction between

the concept as such and the forms of externality it posits over against itself.

It is doubtful, however, whether the conflicts occurring within the realm of history can be adequately understood, first, by means of the classical distinction between reason and passion and, second, by means of Hegel's dialectical determination of the end-relation as such. In order to challenge Hegel's view that his conception of world history has overcome every possible one-sidedness, the following section reconsiders his account of purposiveness in the *Logic*.

## 7. The Entanglement of the End and its Inner Externality

Hegel holds, as we have seen, that the idea of the good must to a certain extent presuppose the means of its actualization and for that reason 'cannot escape the destiny of finitude – a destiny that manifests itself in a number of forms' (544/820). One of these forms pertains to the *content* which the good acquires as soon as it is determined as the particular end of a moral deed. Since such a content is necessarily limited, Hegel notes in passing,

the good in its concrete existence is not only subject to destruction by external contingency..., but by the collision and conflict of the good itself. (544/820)

This passage suggests that the good as such can be divided against itself in such a way that its self-actualization is threatened from within rather than without. Although Hegel does not explain what he means by this remark, it clearly intimates his earlier analyses of tragedy in the *Essay on Natural Law* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. However, the context – the good insofar as it is determined as the ultimate end of moral deeds – does not seem to allow him to dwell on the Greek conception of the conflict inherent in the good as such. Had he done this, he might have realized that the clear-cut distinction between internal and external purposiveness fails to account for 'obstacles' that threaten the self-actualization of an end from within. We have seen that Hegel refers to the content which an end must acquire before actualizing itself in the realm of externality as its 'inner externality'. In what follows I will draw out the disturbing implications of this expression, implications which Hegel's dialectical determination of the end-relation precisely attempts to avoid.



Hegel, as we have seen, conceives of both the content and the means of *any* end as modes of externality on which it depends to actualize itself. More precisely, he considers the end (1) to determine itself by distinguishing between itself and its content and (2) to actualize itself by distinguishing between itself and its means. According to Hegel, the inner externality of an end, that is, its content, can never infringe upon its outward actualization. In the case of external purposiveness, the self-actualization of the end can be thwarted or obstructed by the means. In the case of internal purposiveness, by contrast, the means is not external to the end, and for that reason cannot thwart the actualization of the latter. It might be argued, however, that Hegel's clear-cut distinction between the content of an end (its inner externality) and the means on which it depends to actualize itself conceals a more primordial struggle. This distinction might be considered to *result itself* from the effort of the end to disentangle itself from an externality by which it is from the outset pervaded and of which it cannot control the effects. In order to lay bare a form of inner externality that precedes, so to speak, its determination as content and means, I will briefly reconsider Hegel's conception of external purposiveness, beginning with the means.

According to Hegel's conception of the external end-relation, objects which are determined as means remain to a certain extent indifferent to the end they serve. Yet *insofar as* something is determined as means, it will more or less readily comply with the actualization of the end. The means cannot but subordinate itself to the end, Hegel holds, because end and means constitute, in the end, one and the same totality. A hammer owes its significance as a means exclusively to the end of hammering; apart from this end-relation it is a mere thing. The end of hammering, on the other hand, cannot be reached without the presence of a hammer. Yet this mutual dependence of end and means does not necessarily imply that their relation must be conceived as a unity that unfolds into the totality of its contrary moments. The external end-relation might as well be conceived as a relation in which end and means are entangled to such an extent that they must presuppose one another without being capable of reducing their contrary to a moment of their proper actualization. This can only be the case if the means *as such* – that is, not just the object that is determined as a means – remains to a certain extent external – and hence indifferent – to the end it is supposed to serve. If, in other words, means and end are ultimately *heterogeneous*, then there is no guarantee that the end will, in the end, succeed in annulling the obstinacy of the means on which it depends to actualize itself.

Let me try to make this more concrete. Before an end can set out to actualize itself, it must acquire a determinate content. We have seen that Hegel regards this initial self-determination of the end to be independent of external circumstances; the end posits its 'inner externality' by itself before engaging with external objects. It might be argued, however, that the initial self-determination of the end depends on an inner externality it does not bring about by itself. For external circumstances – if they can be called that – are always already in play when someone defines something as his or her end. Any determination of an end, whether technical, moral, or theoretical, might be considered to result from the effort of the end to annul the part played by external circumstances in this determination. On this view, an end *must first of all transform the innermost externality by which it is determined into a result of its self-determination*, that is, into its proper content. It might be argued, for example, that Kant could only establish the categories of the understanding as 'pure' by disentangling them from the part that grammar or empirical association may have had in the constitution of their content. I do not wish to contend that this disentanglement undermines the constitutive function of these categories, nor that all ends are necessarily 'impure'. I only propose to interpret this very purity as resulting from the effort of the proto-end to purge itself of an externality by which it is from the outset pervaded but which it cannot reduce to one of its proper moments.<sup>13</sup>

Seen in this way, the end emerges as the precarious result of the effort of *both* contrary moments of the end-relation to annul their initial entanglement. If the relation between these moments is symmetrical rather than asymmetrical, then there is no guarantee that their disentanglement will ever completely succeed. Insofar as one of these moments *does* succeed in unwinding out of its inner externality, it will establish itself as end and define this externality as, first, its inner content and, second, the external means of its self-actualization. Only if the end-relation is thus regarded as emerging from the entanglement of contrary – and heterogeneous – moments is it possible to comprehend why something that has been determined as means *always tends to posit itself as an end in itself* instead of subordinating itself to the self-actualization of its contrary. For if the collision between the contrary moments of the end-relation is considered to occur as soon as they attempt to establish themselves as the unique principle of that relation, that is, as ends in themselves, then it is no longer decidable which of these moments will, in the end, prevail.

Although Hegel briefly alludes to the tragic collision that may occur between contrary determinations of the good as such, his dialectical determination of the end-relation does not allow him to comprehend this collision on its own terms. By determining the contrary moments of the end-relation as moments of the same totality, he passes over the collision that results from their effort at annulling their entanglement so as to posit themselves as ends in themselves. Contrary to Hegel, I propose to conceive of the end as from the outset pervaded by an externality that it can neither completely exclude nor completely incorporate. Insofar as the end *does* succeed in disentangling itself from this its innermost externality – that is, to establish itself as end in the first place – the latter emerges as its content and the means of its self-actualization. Insofar as an end *does not* succeed in disentangling itself from its innermost externality, the latter emerges as a moment that tends to establish itself as an end in itself, thus threatening to make impossible the self-actualization of its contrary. Whereas, in sum, Hegel comprehends the resistance of the means as secondary to the end itself and hence as something that cannot infringe upon the end itself, I would rather maintain that this resistance precedes the constitution of the end *as* end and so *essentially* threatens its self-actualization.

By no means do I wish to maintain, however, that the effort of an end to actualize itself is always and necessarily doomed to fail. Living beings are generally capable of actualizing themselves, and human beings are very often capable of subordinating stones, ploughs, and other means to the realization of their ends. Yet the tragic conflicts that burst through in the element of human life testify to a finitude that cannot be accounted for by Hegel's distinction between the internal and external end-relation. Hegel's conception of the end-relation as such is implicitly modeled on simple examples such as the development of a plant or the building of a house. Once the mode of negativity proper to these kinds of processes – absolute negativity – is conceived as essential to the end-relation as such, it becomes impossible, in my view, adequately to account for the tragic elements of human history. That is why I would interpret even a simple end in terms of the entanglement of its contrary moments, even though particular organisms or particular human acts do not yet exhibit the tragic implications of this entanglement.

Whereas Hegel conceives of the end-relation as such as asymmetrical, I have tried to go along with his conception of the external end-relation in order to reinterpret the relation between its contrary moments as symmetrical. Since, on this view, neither moment necessarily prevails

over its contrary, the negativity that characterizes their ensuing collision is tragic rather than absolute. Accordingly, the outcome of the collision between that which posits itself as end and that which it attempts to reduce to the means of its self-actualization, becomes essentially undecidable. Since, on this account, even the internal end-relation results from the attempt of the proto-end at expelling its inner exteriority, Hegel's clear-cut distinction between inner and external purposiveness no longer obtains. Once the end-relation is thus liberated from its dialectical determination, as it were, it can be employed to comprehend the tragic moments of world history. By way of preliminary, the next section briefly considers Hegel's conception of finite spirit from the perspective developed so far.

## 8. Finite Spirit

Hegel, as we have seen, considers the internal end-relation to define both the self-actualization of individual organisms and the overall actualization of the concept in the world as such. Since in both cases the means are completely pervaded by the end, they cannot thwart the self-actualization of the latter. He argues in *Reason in History*, however, that the spheres of subjective and objective spirit testify to a purposiveness that differs from that of plants and animals. As we will see, this purposiveness cannot be reduced to the external purposiveness proper to particular human deeds either. Contrary to the development of a seed into a tree, Hegel notes, the actualization of spirit is dependent on means that possess a natural moment and hence tend to go their own way. Since the self-actualization of spirit is dependent on consciousness and will,

spirit is divided against itself; it has to overcome itself as a truly hostile obstacle to the realization of its end. (RH 151–52/126–27)

This passage clearly echoes the passage in the *Logic* that refers to the collision between the contrary determinations of the good (L II 544/820). Although the *Essay on Natural Law* does not interpret the self-actualization of the good in terms of purposiveness, I consider Hegel's early conception of Greek culture and his later conception of human spirit to rely on the same principle. According to the *Essay on Natural Law*, both the archaic and the rational determinations of justice seek to posit themselves as end in themselves. On his view, rational justice

succeeds in determining itself as end in itself and its contrary moment as the compliant means of its self-actualization.

In a similar vein, Hegel argues in *Reason in History* that consciousness and will together constitute the means on which spirit depends to mediate between its inner determination – freedom – and the actualization of this determination. Since consciousness and will are ‘immersed at first in immediate natural life’, they tend to oppose themselves to the mediation they are supposed to facilitate (151–52/126). As we saw in Chapter 1.5, Hegel considers Antigone and Creon also to resist their mediation because of their immediate immersion in nature (Phen 304/305). Their conflict is tragic precisely because they are *equally* incapable of incorporating their contrary. As far as the general conflict between the archaic and rational determinations of justice is concerned, by contrast, Hegel considers only the archaic determination to suffer from this immediacy. Accordingly, only the rational determination of justice is capable of establishing itself as the unique principle of its contrary determinations. With regard to the contrary determinations of finite spirit Hegel argues again that only one of its contrary moments – consciousness and will taken together – is immersed in nature. Since spirit from the outset has established itself as the unique principle of its contrary determinations, the conflict between these moments is, in the end, anything but tragic. Although the freedom of spirit consists ‘in a constant negation of that which threatens to destroy freedom’, there is no doubt, for Hegel, that this freedom must ultimately prevail.<sup>14</sup>

It is not quite clear, however, whether spirit relates to consciousness and will as internal or external means of its self-actualization and, hence, whether its struggle against the indifference of these means is a matter of internal or external purposiveness. Although these means seem to be internal to spirit itself, they possess a ‘natural’ obstinacy that is rather similar to that of external means. This suggests, it seems to me, that spirit is inhabited by a mode of externality which it has not completely brought about by itself and which it for that reason cannot completely incorporate into itself. Hegel, however, reins in the sway of this externality by implicitly determining consciousness and will as moments of spirit itself, moments that it has handed over to the realm of natural immediacy in order to employ them as the means of its self-actualization. He presupposes, in other words, that consciousness and will supervene only *after* spirit has determined itself from within. For only in this case will spirit be able to overcome the obstinacy inherent in consciousness and will, that is, to employ their energy for its proper,

rational purposes. I argued above that Hegel refers to this principle as the cunning of reason.

The logic of entanglement makes it possible to extract the conflict inherent in spirit as such from this dialectical determination. This logic no longer takes the asymmetrical relation between spirit and will for granted, as has been done throughout the history of philosophy, but considers this relation – and hence their collision – as *resulting* from a more primordial conflict. On this view, what we call will results from the effort of human life to disentangle its organic from its inorganic moment, that is, to determine its rational moment as end in itself and its natural moment as the means of its self-actualization. If, accordingly, the externality which Hegel determines as the mere natural moment of spirit is considered to *precede* this determination, then it is far from sure that this externality will, in the end, comply with its determination as will and, subsequently, with the self-actualization of the rational moment of spirit. In this case there is no guarantee that the rational moment of spirit will be strong enough to reduce its inner externality to the willing means of its self-actualization.

This position may be seen to resemble that of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Yet I do not wish to contend that the will threatens the self-actualization of spirit to a larger extent than Hegel would be willing to accept. For, in my view, the tragic entanglement of the contrary moments of human life is effaced as soon as these moments are determined *in terms of* spirit and will. Hegel, in other words, from the outset determines the conflict inherent in human life as a conflict between asymmetrical moments, thus erasing the effort of *both* contrary moments to annul their entanglement and posit themselves as end in themselves. I would rather propose to conceive of the will as a secondary result – or trace – of an externality that precedes the self-constitution of spirit and for that reason may threaten its self-actualization in a more radical way than either of its subsequent determinations. For it is, to put it simply, not just because of the will that the efforts of human life to come into its own are threatened from within.

## 9. Tragic Negativity

It was argued above that Hegel in the *Logic* implicitly interprets the Kantian opposition between the infinite good and the finite material world as a one-sided determination of the concept as such. Whereas the Kantian conception of the good is determined by spurious infinity, Hegel comprehends the ultimate end of the world as a mode of the

concept which has brought about the means of its self-actualization by itself and hence cannot fail to actualize itself. This dialectical determination of the ultimate end entails that the resistance of spirit to its proper actualization is attributed to its 'natural' moments alone.

I have reinterpreted Hegel's dialectical conception of the end-relation to argue that the end as such is threatened from within by an externality that it can only *attempt* to determine as its content and means. Seen in this way, a means always tends to posit itself as end in itself, thus thwarting the self-actualization of its contrary moment. If this non-dialectical conception of the end-relation is applied to the realm of world history, the resulting position might seem to be very similar to Kant's. However, Kant's philosophy presupposes a clear-cut opposition between infinity and finitude. The perspective that I have tried to develop, by contrast, comprehends this opposition itself as *resulting* from the effort of infinity to establish itself as the absolute principle of its contrary moments, in other words, to posit the moments of infinity and finitude *as* its contrary determinations. On this view, their opposition represses a mode of finitude that undermines the purportedly stable distinction between infinity and finitude. This latter mode of finitude cannot be identified with Kant's because it is not opposed to infinity. Neither can it be identified with Hegel's determination of finitude, however, because it does not let itself be reduced to a moment of infinity. In order to distinguish this mode of finitude from its Kantian and Hegelian determinations, I have termed it tragic negativity.

By exhibiting the entanglement that precedes the clear-cut dialectical relation between end and means, I hope to have further clarified the significance of this negativity. Tragic negativity, I have argued, neither pertains to the principle of self-determination which Hegel calls absolute negativity, nor to the abstract mode of negativity according to which everything is subjected to change. It rather refers to the radical finitude inherent in the effort of something to determine itself from within and to actualize itself in accordance with this determination. It refers, in other words, *both* to the effort of the end to actualize itself by means of its contrary *and* to the effort of the means to posit itself as end in itself. To be more precise: tragic negativity allows the end (1) to 'negate' its entanglement with its contrary determination, and (2) to posit the latter as its means. Yet tragic negativity does not necessarily allow the end subsequently to negate the purported independence of this means, for it allows *at once* this means (1) to negate its entanglement with its contrary determination, and (2) to resist its subordination to that which purports to be the unique principle of the end-relation

as such. Thus, tragic negativity refers to the radically finite effort of contrary moments to annul their entanglement and to posit themselves as the unique principle of both.

Seen in this way, absolute negativity differs from tragic negativity by allowing both contrary moments to negate their *unity* rather than their initial *entanglement* and by allowing *only one of these moments* to incorporate its contrary moment into itself. Accordingly, absolute negativity itself can be regarded as attempting to disentangle itself from tragic negativity and, hence, as attempting to reduce its contrary moment to abstract negativity. On this view, absolute negativity establishes itself as such by reducing its contrary moment to the means of its self-actualization in the element of externality.

The effort of thought to annul the sway of tragic negativity occurs, I should note, nowhere else than in the actual history of human thought, including the history of philosophy. Yet I agree with Hegel that in order to question the ultimate presuppositions of human thought one cannot limit oneself to an account of the views put forward by individual philosophers. Contrary to Hegel, I consider the determination of negativity in terms of the asymmetrical opposition between absolute and abstract negativity to be a presupposition that has dominated thought from the moment that Greek philosophy developed in line with the dialectical strand of Greek tragedy. It is, in my view, this presupposition to which philosophy owes both its infinite energy and its blind spot. So far I have only delimited what I call tragic negativity. Yet this negativity can only become for itself, so to speak, if it is recognized to reign over the finite efforts of human life to come into its own. That is why the next and final chapter is devoted to the realm of world history.



# 9

## History

### 1. Introduction

Throughout this book I have argued that Hegel's conception of tragic conflicts is not bound to his analysis of Greek culture, but constitutes the very heart of his philosophical method. As we have seen, Hegel in the *Phenomenology* employs his insight into tragic conflicts to expose the modern conflict between faith and reason.<sup>1</sup> Radicalizing the tragic strand of this insight, this chapter challenges the prevailing self-conception of late modernity by exposing the tragic nature of the conflicts by which it is defined. Once more, however, I do so by setting out from Hegel's own reflections on world history and from his own criticisms of the modern world.

According to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, world history exhibits spirit's increasing awareness of its essential freedom.<sup>2</sup> I argued in the previous chapter that Hegel comprehends this increasing actualization of freedom in terms of inner purposiveness. Hegel's conception of world history, I contended here, must be challenged not so much because it is teleological as because it conceives of the relation between end and means in terms of absolute negativity alone. In order to question this basic presupposition, however, it is not necessary to oppose Hegel's conception of world history in all respects. For, as I will argue, his account of modern culture is much less optimistic than his account of the past. Hegel can be optimistic about the past because he highlights only those moments that testify to the actualization of rational freedom. He is equally optimistic with regard to the philosophical comprehension of this freedom, a comprehension pre-eminently achieved in speculative science itself. Yet he seems to acknowledge, albeit hesitantly, that his dialectical conception of world history might not suffice

to account for the socio-political collisions evolving from the modern determination of freedom.

In *Reason in History* Hegel considers his philosophy of world history to aim at the reconciliation of spirit with the negative aspects of existence. This reconciliation 'can only be achieved through the knowledge of the affirmative, in which the negative dissolves into something subordinate and conquered'.<sup>3</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, however, *Reason in History* also maintains that the freedom of spirit consists 'in a constant negation of that which threatens to destroy freedom' (RH 55/48). This latter passage leaves open whether or not spirit will actually succeed in reducing the negative to the necessary means of its self-actualization.

Accordingly, several commentators have noted that Hegel offers no solution to some of the problems to which modernity gave birth, including the problem of poverty.<sup>4</sup> Yet if contemporary philosophy still faces the task of grasping its own time in thought, as I think it does, it cannot leave it at that. After a brief account of the thrust of Hegel's philosophy of world history, I draw out the implications of his hesitation as to the capacity of modernity to resolve its inherent conflicts. Focusing on Hegel's reflections on economics, politics, and cultural differences in the *Essay on Natural Law*, *Reason in History*, the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, and the *Philosophy of Right*, I reinterpret these conflicts in light of their irresolvable entanglement.<sup>5</sup>

The formal approach I have adopted so far does not allow me to account for the wide range of empirical and conceptual criticisms of modernity that have been developed both within and without philosophy, nor to engage with debates in contemporary political philosophy. I hope, however, that this concluding chapter prepares the ground for critical reflections on the prevailing assumptions of modernity that are not bound to the limits imposed on this book.

## 2. Hegel's Conception of World History

Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* and the *Philosophy of Right* are among the texts that have met with the most vehement criticisms. Such criticisms often rely on misguided interpretations of concepts such as reason, spirit, and world spirit, or on the erroneous identification of Hegel's conception of the modern state with Prussia during the Restoration Era.<sup>6</sup> I hold that neither of these criticisms is justified. Even though Hegel does not always sufficiently disentangle his account of world history from the concrete theological and political context from which it emerged, his philosophy cannot be reduced to this context. Although

Hegel, as we have seen, sometimes draws on religious images to clarify what he means by the concept, the idea, or reason, he does not assume that some kind of divine power governs the world.<sup>7</sup> The subject of his philosophy of world history – spirit – is neither a substance nor a subject in any current sense of the terms. The concept of spirit rather refers, I would contend, to the attempts of thought to comprehend itself.<sup>8</sup> As far as its occurrence in world history is concerned, the concept of spirit exclusively refers to the mode of thought that underlies the efforts of successive civilizations both to organize themselves in a rational way and to comprehend the principle of this self-organization. It refers, in other words, to the effort of a particular civilization to become conscious of itself. What Hegel means by objective spirit therefore seems to be rendered quite well by the term ‘culture’.<sup>9</sup> The analogy between the realms of subjective and objective spirit does not permit confusing the latter with something like a divine thinking substance (cf. RH 61/53).

Neither should Hegel’s reflections on the modern state be mistaken for an apology of the Prussian state such as it was known to him. Hegel always comprehends a particular political system in light of the determination of freedom that constitutes its ultimate principle. Accordingly, the *Philosophy of Right* is exclusively concerned with the socio-political structures of the modern state which can be deduced from this principle, that is, with the *idea* of the modern state.<sup>10</sup> The principle of freedom that manifests itself, albeit inadequately, in the political systems evolved throughout world history is, in its turn, nothing but a particular guise of the self-determining activity to which Hegel refers as the ‘concept’. I would like to recall that Hegel always attempts to articulate the implications of a particular mode of thought from within. This is also the case when he attempts to articulate the ‘spirit’ of a particular civilization, even when this civilization is his own. Taking his bearings from contemporaneous thinkers, his account of the modern state seeks to draw out the implications of the principle of individual freedom. On the one hand, the modern idea of freedom requires that the laws and institutions of the state accord with the principle of subjective freedom to the largest possible extent.<sup>11</sup> The principle of Hegel’s philosophy as a whole implies, on the other hand, that this freedom can only be realized by means of an organic organization of the state as a whole.<sup>12</sup>

Insofar as the concept enacts itself in the element of world history, Hegel holds, it takes the form of the principle of rational freedom. The more a civilization has succeeded in organizing itself in accordance with this principle, the more it has disentangled itself from the arbitrariness proper to nature (LPH 58–59/40–41). What Hegel sometimes calls world

spirit refers to the effort of the concept – qua rational freedom – to unfold and comprehend itself in the element of world history.<sup>13</sup> The principle of rational freedom develops not so much because it is consciously directed toward a particular goal, but rather because particular civilizations at a certain point become aware – by means of particular individuals or groups – that the particular determination of freedom on which they rely is not in accordance with the principle of freedom as such. The insight into this discrepancy can only occur, according to Hegel, when a civilization has exhausted the possibilities opened up by its particular determination of freedom. Just as particular pure concepts such as being or substance at a certain point turn out to prevent thought from achieving adequate knowledge of the world, particular determinations of the principle of freedom at a certain point turn out to prevent a civilization from maintaining itself as an organic totality. At this stage, such a particular determination of freedom no longer enhances the well-being of the civilization, but rather causes its downfall. The insight into the one-sidedness of this particular determination of freedom yields a less one-sided determination.<sup>14</sup> This new determination of freedom emerges within the existing civilization, but as a germ that can only begin to develop once the existing determination of freedom – and the socio-political structures evolving from it – has been abolished.<sup>15</sup> As long as the principle of freedom is determined in a one-sided manner, a civilization will at some point become aware that its actual determination of freedom is at odds with this principle itself.

Thus, whenever a civilization establishes a specific system of institutions and laws, it testifies to a certain, albeit limited, insight into the principle of freedom as such. This insight is further articulated by the modes of art, religion, and philosophy that unfold within a particular civilization.<sup>16</sup> Each of these modes of spirit can be considered to grasp its own time in thought, thus allowing the members of a civilization either to identify with the general principles of this civilization or to become aware of the inherent tension between these principles and the principle of freedom as such. Insofar as art, religion, and philosophy originate in a particular civilization, they belong to the realm of objective spirit (RH 123/103). Yet insofar as these modes of self-consciousness transcend the limits of a particular culture, they partake in the effort of thought as such adequately to comprehend its ultimate principle (LPH 96/71). That is why Hegel in the *Encyclopedia* refers to this latter realm as the realm of absolute spirit.<sup>17</sup> Philosophy, in Hegel's view, comprehends the essence of its own time in the highest possible manner. For whereas politics, science, art, and religion remain bound to the determination

of freedom constitutive of a particular civilization, philosophy seeks to comprehend this determination in light of the self-actualization of pure thought as such. This is, of course, particularly true of speculative science itself. Seen in this way, world history also constitutes the element wherein pure thought achieves an ever more adequate insight into the necessary stages of its self-actualization.<sup>18</sup>

It should be noted, however, that Hegel never purports to offer a purely a priori deduction of the successive stages of world history. His philosophy of world history is distinguished from historical approaches to world history in the same way as his philosophy of nature is distinguished from the natural sciences. Although Hegel is, on the one hand, exclusively concerned with world history insofar as it testifies to the actualization of freedom, he must, on the other hand, always draw on historical research in order to lay bare the various stages of this actualization.<sup>19</sup> Any mode of thought, Hegel maintains, relies on certain a priori categories, even when it takes itself to be exclusively concerned with mere facts.<sup>20</sup> It is pivotal, therefore, to choose a category that permits of laying bare the totality of essential moments of world history. Hegel considers his approach to be truly philosophical precisely because it takes its bearings from the category of rational freedom rather than from abstract categories such as change, causality, or perfectibility.<sup>21</sup> In his view, only the category of rational, self-conscious freedom allows philosophy adequately to distinguish the essential from the non-essential:

In order to be able to do this, one must know the essential, and, with regard to world history as a whole, this essence is... the consciousness of freedom, and the phases which this consciousness assumes in developing itself. Insofar as thought is directed to this category it is directed to the truly essential. (LPH 88/65)

Thus, Hegel's conception of world history is informed, first, by the a priori principle of self-conscious freedom, which itself constitutes a particular mode of the concept as such. His perspective presupposes, second, that this principle has unfolded its immanent determinations in the element of world history and, third, that these determinations constitute the basic principles of the social, political, and cultural self-comprehension of successive civilizations.

This perspective allows Hegel to completely discard certain aspects of world history, such as the mere succession of events or the fate of

individual citizens. It equally allows him to discard views on world history informed by morality, piety, or dread.<sup>22</sup> By relegating these aspects to the realm of mere contingency, only those aspects of world history that testify to the increasing actualization of freedom emerge as its essential moments. Now I would agree with Hegel that a philosophy of world history must somehow disentangle the essential from the non-essential and must do so on the basis of a certain principle. Hegel's specific determination of this principle entails, however, that the *incapacity* of civilizations to resolve the collisions inherent in their particular determination of freedom cannot be conceived as essential to world history as such: moments of crisis necessarily announce the birth of a less one-sided determination of freedom and cannot, in the end, interfere with the truly essential actualization of rational freedom.

Be that as it may, *modern* civilizations are supposed to have overcome, at least in principle, the limited conceptions of freedom inherent in the preceding ones. Hegel seems to be less certain, therefore, whether the collisions characteristic of modern civilizations can be resolved in the same way as the collisions that brought about the downfall of previous civilizations.<sup>23</sup> Hegel's hesitation with regard to the collisions characteristic of modern civilizations will allow me to argue that these latter collisions pre-eminently testify to the sway of tragic negativity and, more generally, that within the element of world history tragic negativity essentially thwarts the proper force of absolute negativity. In order to expose traces of this negativity in Hegel's own philosophy I once more return to the *Essay on Natural Law*.

### 3. Economy

In the *Essay on Natural Law* Hegel draws on Plato's *Republic* to distinguish between the classes of free and unfree citizens. Whereas the former class is immediately devoted to the community as a whole, the latter is devoted to the sphere of labor and property, thus contributing to the well-being of the community only in an indirect way. It is imperative, Hegel holds, that these two spheres be clearly separated from one another. The system of property, he writes,

must constitute itself in a class of its own, and in that case must be able to expand in its whole length and breadth, really separate and isolated from the class of the nobility. (NL 492/102)

Since citizens who pursue their private interests contribute to the well-being of the society as a whole, the society must allow the realm of economic activity freely to expand. Although Hegel does not explicitly refer to modern societies in this context, he seems to understand modern civil society along the same lines:

[T]his class is determined by being at home in [the sphere of] possession as such and the kind of justice that is possible with regard to possession, and by constituting at the same time a coherent system, such that the relation of possession is taken up into a formal unity and each individual, being as such capable of possession, is related to all others as a universal being [*als Allgemeines*], that is, as burgher in the sense of *bourgeois*.<sup>24</sup>

Citizens that are bound to one another by economic interests must be protected by a coherent system of civil law, regardless of their birth and social position. This means that the realm of private interests must, on the one hand, be raised above the random struggle for possession and, on the other, remain separated from the realm of the state. Whereas a society should profit from the positive effects of selfishness, the state should not allow the destructive effects of this selfishness to endanger its health. Hegel emphasizes that only by untangling the realm of the state from the realm of private interests ‘each of them is done justice, and that alone which ought to be is brought into existence’ (494/104). This ‘actuality of ethical life’ is brought about by distinguishing the ‘absolute indifference’ represented by the state from the realm of economic interests characterized by ‘the actual opposition’. This, he continues, must be done in such a way ‘that the latter is subjugated by the former and this subjugation itself becomes indifferent and reconciled’ (494/104).

However, Hegel leaves open the question of whether a society – by means of the state – is always capable of subjugating its contrary moment to its proper interests. The first *Jena System Draft* (1803/04) suggests that it is particularly difficult for modern societies to control the destructive effects of the economic realm to which they owe their life. The market, that is, might turn out to be a fury always bursting out of the domain assigned to it by the state:

When, within a large nation, need and labor are elevated into this universality, they form on their own account a tremendous system [*ungeheures System*] of communality and mutual dependence, a self-moving life of what is dead, a life which, in its motion, blindly

moves back and forth like the elements and, like a wild beast, requires continual strict dominance and taming.<sup>25</sup>

Due to the random movements of the market,

the coherence of the singular kind of labor with the whole infinite mass of needs becomes completely cluttered and a [matter of] blind dependence, so that some far-off operation often suddenly cuts off the labor of a whole class of men who were satisfying their needs by it, making it superfluous and useless.<sup>26</sup>

This issue recurs in the later *Philosophy of Right*. Civil society, Hegel here argues, facilitates the realization of selfish ends by means of

a system of all-encompassing dependence, so that the subsistence, welfare, and rights of the individual...are interwoven with, and grounded on, the subsistence, welfare, and rights of all, and have actuality and security only in this context.<sup>27</sup>

However, this passage concerns the *principle* of civil society rather than its *actual existence*. The modern system of economic interdependence does not only create ever new opportunities to satisfy ever new needs. Hegel realized that capitalism produces at the same time the increasing opposition between a small group of property-owners and a large rabble deprived of the possibility of subsisting by means of labor and so of participating in public life.<sup>28</sup> According to Hegel, this problem cannot be solved by public welfare or the artificial creation of jobs, for these solutions contradict the very principle of civil society:

It thus emerges that civil society, despite an excess of wealth, is not wealthy enough, that is, its own distinct resources are not sufficient to control the excess of poverty and the formation of a rabble. (§ 245)

The increasing gap between the rich and the poor inherent in civil society – ‘its inner dialectic’ (§ 246) – impels it

to move beyond its own confines and look for consumers, and hence the means it requires to subsist, in other nations, which lack those means of which it has a surplus.<sup>29</sup>



If the principle of particularity constitutive of civil society posits itself as an absolute principle, as it tends to do, then this society 'affords a spectacle of extravagance and misery as well as of the physical and ethical corruption common to both' (§ 185). Affirming that the problem of poverty 'torments modern societies especially', Hegel offers no solution to this problem (§ 244, add.).

In line with the first *Jena System Draft*, the *Philosophy of Right* here refers to a mode of dialectic governed not so much by reason as by the blind power of the market (§ 246). This negative dialectic, so to speak, pertains to the increasing development of the inherent contradiction between the modern principle of individual freedom and the lack of freedom that ensues from a liberal economic system. Aware that philosophy cannot predict the future, Hegel does not claim that the modern state will actually be able to resolve this contradiction.<sup>30</sup> He might have argued that this question falls outside the scope of philosophy because it depends on contingent circumstances such as good government (cf. LPH 539/456). Yet he may have had another reason for not suggesting a solution. For, as was suggested above, the conflict between the modern determination of freedom and the increasing lack of freedom created by the market cannot be resolved by the emergence of a civilization based on a less one-sided determination of freedom. The modern determination of freedom – the insight that human beings as such are free – simply cannot be surpassed.

Hegel seems to have realized that the rational institutions based on this determination do not in themselves guarantee the actualization of freedom which constitutes the end of the modern state. He does not point out, however, that the market and the modern state rely on the very same principle of individual freedom. While the modern determination of freedom allows civilizations to emancipate from feudalism, it creates at once a tremendous system of dependence and exploitation that, I would like to suggest, threatens to destroy the very freedom at stake in these civilizations.<sup>31</sup> Needless to say, in our age this latter system has come to pervade the relation between parts of the world rather than that between particular classes. Both Hegel and Marx understood that the modern determination of freedom does not guarantee its adequate actualization. Unlike Hegel, however, Marx thought that the contradiction inherent in bourgeois societies could be resolved by annulling the opposition between state and civil society altogether. Yet the contrary is actually the case: states have made themselves increasingly dependent on economic interests – the world seems to be governed by oil rather than reason.

I noted above that the market and the modern state both rely on the modern determination of freedom. Accordingly, they might be considered, following Hegel, to constitute contrary moments of the same principle, moments that both attempt to posit themselves as the absolute principle of the society as a whole. Hence their collision. Although Hegel seems to have been aware of this, his overall conception of world history did not allow him, in my view, to interpret the modern conflict between state and market in terms of his earlier conception of tragedy. If, however, the struggle between contrary moments is traced back to their initial entanglement rather than to their initial unity, then their collision no longer entails the necessary subjugation of the one by the other. On this view, the determination of freedom appealed to by the market is not secondary to the determination of freedom appealed to by the state. One would rather have to acknowledge that human civilization as such originates in the finite attempt to expel the – inorganic – moment of self-interest from itself. But if economic interests cannot be reduced to a mere secondary moment, then they will always threaten to go their own way, regardless of the ends they were initially supposed to serve. And if this is the case, then there is no guarantee that modern states, for all their rationality, will be able to control the conflict between the ruthless struggle for wealth and the well-being of the society as a whole.

The same holds true of the contemporary conflict between economic and environmental interests. Also in this case one should, in my view, acknowledge their tragic entanglement and, accordingly, the impossibility of controlling the outcome of their conflict. This does not imply, however, that particular conflicts between, on the one hand, economic interests, and, on the other, efforts at protecting what is vulnerable, can never be resolved. Neither does it imply that we must not resist as much as we can ‘that which threatens to destroy freedom’ (RH 55/48).

#### 4. Politics

As we have seen, Hegel considers modern states to rest on the principle that human beings as such are free. The most accomplished state is therefore the state ‘in which the greatest degree of freedom prevails’ (RH 142/119). This means for Hegel that the state should allow its citizens freely to develop their talents, yet without letting its ends be determined by their arbitrary will (PR, § 207). However, Hegel’s account of the modern state is not limited to this principle alone. Rather, he proceeds by letting its immanent determinations unfold into the socio-political structures constitutive of any modern state. Insofar as these structures

follow from the rational principle of the modern state, they constitute the essential actuality of the state, an actuality that does not necessarily coincide with the existing political order. Precisely because Hegel includes the necessary moments of the modern state in his account, it is not always easy to differentiate between the essential actuality of the state and its empirical existence. Hence the deliberate ambiguity of Hegel's infamous equation of actuality and rationality in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* (PR 24/20).

In order to articulate the essential determinations of the modern state, Hegel, as always, goes along with the more or less explicit insight of modern societies into their proper essence. The *Philosophy of Right* – published in 1820 – makes it clear that he holds this insight primarily to have been achieved by the moderate reformers who, between 1807 and 1815, had attempted to emancipate the Prussian state from its feudal institutions without, on the other hand, completely abolishing traditional forms of local and national political participation.<sup>32</sup> Whereas Hegel draws on the ideas of these enlightened political thinkers, he distinguishes himself from them by comprehending these ideas in light of the necessary self-determination of rational freedom at stake in the history of spirit as such. Since the principle of freedom entails the urge to actualize itself, Hegel can maintain, following Rousseau, that these ideas respond to the universal or rational will. The main point, he notes in *Reason and History*,

is that freedom, as determined by the concept, is not grounded on the subjective will and on arbitrariness, but on the insight of the universal will [*die Einsicht des allgemeinen Willens*], and that the system of freedom consists in the free development of the various moments of this freedom. The subjective will is a purely formal determination from which it does not follow *what* it wills. The rational will alone is universal in the sense that it determines and develops itself from within and unfolds its moments as organic parts.<sup>33</sup>

What Hegel here terms the rational will should not be identified with the will of an actual head of state or legislator. Whereas the will of an individual, be it Napoleon, has no content of its own, the principle of rational freedom entails the urge to actualize its immanent determinations (144/121). This urge manifests itself whenever a mode of government is established that accords with the principle of freedom to a larger extent than the foregoing one, such as is illustrated by the various efforts to abolish feudalism and slavery. Even though particular

rulers, governments, or legislators may ground their decisions on a certain insight into what is rational in and for itself, their insight cannot be identified with the principle of rational freedom itself.

This principle implies, Hegel notes in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, that the state be actually governed by civil servants rather than by a monarch:

The government rests with the civil service and is completed by the personal decision of the monarch, for a final decision is . . . absolutely necessary. Yet with firmly established laws and a settled organization of the state, what is left to the sole decision of the monarch is, insofar as substantial matters are concerned, no great matter. It is certainly a very fortunate matter for a nation to be endowed with a monarch of noble character; yet in a great state even this is of minor importance, since its strength lies in its rationality. . . . Those who know *ought to* govern – not ignorance and the presumptuous conceit of knowing better.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, however, Hegel seems to assume that a constitutional monarchy is more rational than a republic because the arbitrariness involved in the succession of monarchs is less far-reaching than the arbitrariness involved in the succession of elected presidents. Yet what matters, in his view, is not so much the choice between a monarchic or a republican constitution as the capacity of any constitution to prevent the actual head of state from letting his individual will prevail over the rational will of the society as a whole.<sup>35</sup>

What is at stake in any modern state, for Hegel, is a form of government that resolves the opposition between the government and those who are governed in a rational manner (RH 139–40/117). A government is rational if it, on the one hand, allows the particular powers to distinguish themselves from one another so as to establish themselves as relative totalities and, on the other hand, guarantees that these powers ‘freely collaborate toward the realization of a single purpose’.<sup>36</sup> Only if they constitute ‘an organic whole’ (147/123) can the infinite distinction between the rational will of the society as a whole and the individual will of the citizens be resolved:

What finally matters [*darauf kommt es an*] is that an infinite distinction has been brought about and has been resolved into the insight of the individuals that their freedom, independence, and essence resides

in their unity with that which is substantial, and that their actions are shaped by the latter. (144–45/121)

Whenever Hegel refers to what finally matters, to the main point, or to that which ought to be the case, he refers to the essential actuality of the modern state rather than to its actual existence, albeit not always unambiguously.

Other passages likewise make it clear that the organic model which Hegel holds to ensue from the modern determination of freedom does not coincide with the Prussian state of the time. Thus, it is pivotal for Hegel that the sphere of the government and the sphere of the citizens be mediated by social estates representing the particular interests of the various parts of the population.<sup>37</sup> In Prussia and elsewhere, these estates had traditionally represented the interests of the nobility and the cities, in such a way that the nobility always had the upper hand. Between 1807 and 1815, various efforts were made to abolish the feudal structure of these estates and to transform them into modern institutions representing the interests of all citizens at the level of local, regional, and national politics. The traditional system of corporations or guilds, at odds with the idea of a free market, was equally being dismantled.<sup>38</sup> Due to the resistance of the nobility and, after 1816, the defeat of Napoleon, many of these efforts at reform were never carried out or overturned.<sup>39</sup> According to an addition to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel considers these developments a great loss:

For some time now, organization has only been directed from above, and this kind of organization has been the main concern [of the government]. The lower level, the mass-like whole is easily left more or less inorganic. Yet it is extremely important that it be organized, because only then does it constitute a power, a force; otherwise it is merely an aggregate, an amount of scattered atoms. Legitimate power only resides in the organic existence of the particular spheres.<sup>40</sup>

Here and elsewhere, Hegel stresses that the opposition between the government and those who are governed must be resolved by mediating institutions that represent the interests of particular groups, yet in such a way that their 'legitimate power' remains subordinated to the rational end of the society as a whole. He does not suggest, however, that modern societies will actually be able to organize themselves in accordance with this essential actuality. Whereas 'the rational concept of the state' has

overcome the opposition between government and people, this opposition continues to be affirmed in the prevailing self-conception of the state. As long as this is the case, 'it cannot be said that the state – which is the unity of the universal and the particular will – has already become actual' (RH 142/119).

Hegel thought that the legitimate participation of individual citizens in local and national politics should be achieved through estates and corporations rather than democracy.<sup>41</sup> He would not oppose the view that democracy is a way of protecting the society against the arbitrariness of a government controlled by corruptible civil servants or an incapable head of state. He did not embrace democracy as the right way of achieving this end, however, because in his view it gave free rein to an arbitrariness even more difficult to control than the one it was meant to overcome:

Not satisfied with the establishment of rational rights, with freedom of person and property, with the existence of a political organization in which are to be found various circles of civil life each having its own function to perform, ... liberalism opposes to all this the atomistic principle of the individual wills: everything should happen through their express power and have their express sanction. Due to this formal determination of freedom, to this abstraction, these individual wills prevent the establishment of a firm organization. Freedom forthwith opposes the particular decisions of the government, for these are the result of a particular will and hence of arbitrariness. The cabinet collapses through the will of the many, and the former opposition takes its place. Yet the latter, having become the government, is in its turn opposed by the many ... It is this collision, this tangle [*Knoten*], this problem, that now challenges history [*an dem die Geschichte steht*] and that it has to resolve in future times.<sup>42</sup>

Again, Hegel leaves open whether history will actually succeed in subordinating the spurious negativity haunting the succession of elected governments to the actualization of rational freedom. He would certainly maintain, however, that the arbitrariness involved in this succession is bound to increase the alienation of the citizens from the state.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, the problem he considers to be inherent in democracy is not so much that a majority elects the government, but that an elected government cannot, in the long run, represent the universal will. Such a government is necessarily reduced to a particular will which, as such, becomes opposed to another particular will. We have seen that this

reduction of the universal to a particular moment is, for Hegel, pre-eminently represented by the tragic conflict between Antigone and Creon. Yet it might be argued, against Hegel, that the conflict inherent in democracy rather ensues from the effort of *two equally particular determinations of the will* to establish themselves as the absolute principle of the society as a whole. On this view, the government does not represent the universal will that threatens to be reduced to a particular will, but rather a particular will that has momentarily succeeded in establishing itself as the universal will of the society as a whole. As such, its purported universality will, at some point, always be contested by a contrary determination of the alleged universal will of the society as a whole.

Hegel's remarks concerning the spurious infinity inherent in democracy are, of course, not directed against the state as such. They might be employed, however, to argue that *any* government – whether elected or not – seeks to establish itself as the universal will of the society by effacing its proper particularity, that is, by disentangling itself from its contrary moment. The attempt to annul its proper particularity might well entail the repression of modes of particularity it then finds over against itself. On this view, the endless succession of particular wills which, in Hegel's view, constitutes the inherent threat of democracy, would manifest a threat inherent in the political order as such.

For Hegel, as we have seen, the rational state requires that the universal will of the government and the individual wills of the citizens be mediated by estates and corporations representing their particular interests. It might be argued that in our age this mediating function has been taken over by labor unions, political parties, non-governmental organizations, and a network of welfare provisions. Yet whereas such institutions are meant to bridge the gap between the state and the citizens, they in fact threaten to isolate themselves from the society as a whole. A society is rational, Hegel holds, insofar as its government succeeds in controlling the destructive tendency of its mediating institutions. The more rational the government, the less it will be opposed by these institutions. He does not suggest, however, that governments will actually succeed in reining in the proper force of their mediating institutions. If, as I propose to do, both the government and its mediating institutions are conceived as resulting from the initial entanglement that precedes the opposition between universality and particularity, then there is no reason to believe that this opposition will necessarily be overcome.

Hegel was aware that modern societies suffer, first, from the tendency of particular wills (represented by institutions such as churches and

corporations) to isolate themselves from the whole and, second, from the incapacity of democracy to establish the unity of the universal and the particular will. These are problems that continue to challenge the contemporary world. Although Hegel does not purport to solve these problems, he interprets them in light of the rational structure of the state he considers to follow from the principle of freedom as such. I have tried, in turn, to comprehend *the very structure* of the political order in terms of the irresolvable entanglement that underlies – and haunts – the opposition between universality and particularity. This perspective entails that both contrary moments mutually depend on one another in such a way that neither is necessarily strong enough to determine the other as the means of its self-actualization. It also entails that the dialectical relation between, on the one hand, the purportedly universal end that is represented by the government and, on the other, the ends of particular groups, always threatens to turn into the collision between two contrary modes of particularity.<sup>44</sup> On this view, it is not a matter of contingency that civilizations fail to reconcile the contrary moments of political life. Neither, however, is it a matter of absolutely necessity.

## 5. Intercultural Conflicts

The collision between a government purporting to represent the interests of the society as a whole and the interests of particular groups can manifest itself in various ways. In the twentieth century, decolonization, persecution, ideologies, and the unequal distribution of wealth have driven more people than ever to Western democratic societies. This migration is certainly one of the factors to have increased the tensions between cultural minorities and the predominant culture represented by the state. These tensions not only affect particular societies, but have also developed into collisions between militant forms of Muslim fundamentalism and the purportedly secular, democratic world. Intercultural conflicts such as these undoubtedly constitute one of the most urgent problems of the contemporary world.<sup>45</sup> They challenge not only the liberal principles of modern societies, but seem to undermine the prevailing optimism and self-complacency of modernity as such. Addressing intercultural conflicts in terms of the logic of entanglement elaborated so far, this section is limited to such conflicts as unfold within modern nations rather than globally.

Many have become aware that collisions induced by cultural differences are not necessarily resolved by subjugating the realm of particular



cultural values to the purportedly universal values represented by the state. It has also emerged, however, that these collisions are neither necessarily resolved by allowing particular communities to isolate themselves from the society as a whole. It might be argued, therefore, that neither the repression of cultural difference in the name of universal values nor the acceptance of cultural difference in the name of tolerance necessarily thwarts the polarization between the state and particular cultural minorities.

In order to interpret intercultural conflicts in light of the entanglement of contrary paradigms, I will, once again, set out from Hegel's own reflections on the matter. This may seem a hopeless undertaking, given his well-known depreciation of Africa and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Asia, in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. As far as world history is concerned, Hegel aligns himself indeed with the most narrow spirit of his time, a choice that can only partly be explained by his limited access to reliable sources.<sup>46</sup> Hegel conceives of Africa as falling outside the domain of world history because he sees the African tribes as completely caught up in nature and hence as incapable of giving rise to spirit proper (LPH 129/99). This view of Africa fits very well, of course, with the idea that world history testifies to the increasing actualization of social, political, and intellectual freedom.

Insofar as modern societies are concerned, however, Hegel rather sides with the tolerant spirit of the Enlightenment. Thus, the *Philosophy of Right* maintains that the state must protect the rights of individual human beings concerning work and property, regardless of their race, confession or nationality. Insofar as these rights are concerned, particularity does not count:

It is part of education [*Bildung*], of thinking as consciousness of the individual in the form of universality, that I am apprehended as a universal person, in which [respect] all are identical. A human being counts as such because he is a human being, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian, etc. This consciousness... is of infinite importance. (PR, § 209, rem.)

According to Hegel, the principle of modern civilizations requires that justice abstract from cultural, religious, and racial differences between people. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* he even holds that civilization as such consists in the annulment of natural differences. Thus, Greek culture initially did not rely on 'the natural bond' of patriarchal structures (LPH 277/225), but received vital impulses from the arrival of

strangers (280/227). Greece precisely came into its own by 'overcoming' the strangeness (278/226) to which it owed its initial development:

As far as the origin of its national identity is concerned, we must consider ... the *strangeness* it contained within itself [*die Fremdartigkeit in sich selbst*] as its basic moment. ... It is only from the strangeness which it contains within itself that [spirit] derives the power to establish itself as spirit. The origin of the history of Greece testifies to this migration and blend of tribes that were partly native and partly completely foreign; and it was precisely Attica, whose people was to attain the highest stage of Greek bloom, that offered asylum to the most diverse tribes and families. Every world-historical nation ... has been brought about in this way.<sup>47</sup>

It is even impossible, Hegel continues, to determine which tribes originated in Greece and which came from elsewhere (278/226). Yet whereas Greek civilization owed its life to a heterogeneity preceding its self-constitution, it had to efface this heterogeneity in order to unfold the totality of its organic moments. According to Hegel, such homogenization constitutes the beginning of every civilization. The particular way in which a civilization achieves this homogenization depends on the particular determination of freedom on which is based. Thus, the slavery inherent in Greek culture can be considered a remnant of the strangeness that pervaded its very beginning. Modern civilizations, conversely, seem to have annulled their initial heterogeneity to a much larger extent. Hence the idea of universal rights to which Hegel alludes in the passage from the *Philosophy of Right* quoted above.

Interestingly, Hegel in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* does not relate the attempt of Greek culture to overcome its inherent strangeness to his earlier account of tragedy. For Hegel, tragedy only seems to begin when a more or less homogeneous culture is faced with the collision between contrary determinations of justice, that is, when the spirit of a particular nation has already established itself as such. However, nothing prevents us from extending the realm of tragedy to the initial effort of contrary moments to annul their entanglement. If these heterogeneous contraries imply one another in such a way that neither of them is necessarily capable of subordinating the other, then the effort of a culture to establish itself as an organic totality is always threatened by the utterly unstable relation between its contrary moments.

According to Hegel's account of Greek culture in the *Phenomenology*, the state – which he identifies with the moment of universality – tends

to respond to the threat posed by the sphere of particularity by repressing its purported independence. As we have seen, he stresses that such repression only yields the further polarization of both spheres. Identifying the sphere of particularity with the spirit of individualism, Hegel maintains that the state

can only maintain itself by repressing this spirit of individualism, and, because this spirit is an essential moment, it at once creates this spirit; due to its repressive attitude toward it, it creates this spirit as a hostile principle.<sup>48</sup>

In our time, the perennial collision between the universal and the particular unfolds not only between the public and the private, but also between modern, liberal societies – represented by the state – and those who identify with a cultural paradigm based on a different set of values. Evidently, contemporary conflicts between contending cultural paradigms cannot simply be interpreted in terms derived from Greek tragedy. There is, for instance, nothing archaic about the way in which individuals and communities today identify with particular cultural and religious values or with a particular construction of the past. I will therefore consider contemporary intercultural conflicts in light of the formal distinction between particularity and universality that Hegel considers to inform the tragic conflict which unfolded within Greek culture.<sup>49</sup> Whereas I will go along with Hegel's view on the tragic polarization of contrary determinations, I will reinterpret this polarization in light of their irresolvable entanglement.

Seen in this light, the conflicts between the state and the particular cultural minorities it harbors are tragic precisely insofar as both sides attempt – in contrary ways – to annul the entanglement of the one-sided principles to which they adhere, thus depriving themselves of a moment that is vital to their own being. On this view, the purportedly universal values advocated by the modern state result from its attempt to efface the particularity from which they emerge and, hence, to annul the proper force of the paradigm it opposes. As long as a modern state, for example, posits the sphere of particular moral, cultural, and religious values over against itself, it threatens to deprive its citizens of valuable means to control their selfish impulses, make sense of their lives, and participate in civil society. Those who identify with the paradigm of a particular cultural minority, conversely, threaten to collapse the distinction between universality and particularity altogether. In order to clarify the nature of the ensuing polarization of both paradigms I will briefly

consider the ways in which individual human beings may relate to the entanglement of contrary moments.

This entanglement entails first of all that I cannot exclusively relate to myself as a human being that has the right to be recognized as such. I find myself at once determined by a particular sex, language, skin, character, descent, and culture, that is, by a particularity that I cannot completely appropriate. These particular determinations constitute a strangeness, so to speak, that precedes my efforts at self-identification and that I cannot subordinate to my true identity. This is unsettling. There are, perhaps, three ways of responding to this inherent strangeness.<sup>50</sup> First, I may try to disentangle the universal and the particular by identifying with the former and positing the latter over against myself as a hostile principle. By setting myself against the particularity I have thus excluded from myself, I need no longer be disturbed by the particularity of my own sex, skin, and values. In order to annul the threat of the particularity I thus find over against myself, I subsequently try – in vain – to subordinate this particularity to my allegedly universal values. Second, I may try to disentangle the universal and the particular by collapsing their difference altogether and completely identifying with the particularity of my sex, skin, and values. By doing this, my own particularity is no longer at odds with my effort at self-identification. In this case, I posit my own particularity over against the particularity of others without acknowledging a universality that transcends these different particularities. Yet it turns out that I cannot completely deprive myself of the universality I thus tried to annul. For insofar as I identify with my particular sex, skin, and values, I make myself vulnerable to the efforts of others violently to reduce me to these particular features. In order to ward off sexism, racism, and other kinds of discrimination, I therefore demand not only that my particular sex, skin, and values be recognized as such, but also that I be treated as equal insofar as justice, education and career are concerned. This contradictory demand cannot be met by a one-sided appeal to either universality or particularity. Yet in order to act I need to adopt one of these contrary determinations as my guiding principle. No policy can be based on two principles at once, even less so if both of them refuse to be subordinated to their counterpart.

If particularity and universality depend on one another in such a way that they can neither exclude nor incorporate their contrary, then I might try to affirm, finally, their unsettling entanglement. In this case, I would not reduce the other to his or her particularity, nor to his or her universality, but recognize myself in his or her precarious attempt

to respond to the contradictory demands that the entanglement of contrary determinations entails. I would no less recognize myself, however, in his or her attempt to annul this entanglement by, for instance, one-sidedly embracing or rejecting particular values.

Now if the collision between the state and cultural minorities is interpreted in a similar vein, it can be traced back to the incapacity of both sides to endure the entanglement of contrary determinations, neither of which has as yet established itself as the absolute principle of both. In order to present its values as universal, the state must efface the particularity from which these values emerged. It does this by, first, positing the realm of particularity over against itself, and, second, by either subjugating the latter to its purportedly universal ends or, ultimately, by annihilating such guises of particularity as resist this subjugation. It thus seeks to establish itself as a concrete mode of universality. According to the logic of entanglement, however, the state will not necessarily succeed in subordinating the realm of particularity to its proper ends. The more it fails to do so, the more it will turn the realm of particularity into a hostile principle, thus at once reducing its own principle to an abstract mode of universality. Identifying one-sidedly with such values as reason, progress, freedom, or the individual, it tends to oppose such values as faith, tradition, obligation, or the community, as is clearly illustrated by Creon's actions. In doing so, it threatens to deprive individuals and communities of valuable means to control their immediate impulses, pursue moral ends, and participate in civil society.

Those who identify with a particular cultural minority, for their part, will tend to react to the homogenization advocated by the state by increasingly identifying with the sphere of particularity, thus equally isolating themselves from the whole. By collapsing the distinction between universality and particularity altogether, they tend to assign the sphere of universality – on which they continue to depend – to the state alone. They thus create the purportedly universal values adhered to by the state as a hostile force. In so doing, individuals and groups equally threaten to deprive themselves of valuable means to participate in the public realm.

I suggested above that neither repression nor tolerance necessarily decreases the inherent tension between, on the one hand, the effort at homogenization of the state and, on the other, the resistance of particular minorities against this homogenization.<sup>51</sup> I also suggested, still following Hegel, that this tension turns into a collision as soon as the state and particular minorities one-sidedly identify with contrary cultural paradigms. Contrary to Hegel, however, I have traced back this

polarization not to the asymmetrical relation between universality and particularity, but rather to the initial entanglement of two heterogeneous elements that attempt to prevail over their counterpart. The logic of entanglement entails, first, that we always tend to efface rather than face the entanglement of contrary determinations and, second, that this effacement induces their polarization rather than their reconciliation. This effacement also occurs, I would hold, whenever a culture – by means of its ethics, politics, or philosophy – clings one-sidedly to relativism or universalism and, accordingly, to communitarianism or a politics of assimilation.

I do not wish to suggest, however, that collisions between contending cultural paradigms can never be resolved. Those who adhere to contending cultural paradigms can – and should – try to resist processes of polarization by all means. Modern societies, represented by liberal-democratic governments, should recognize that the negative elements they oppose, such as dogmatism, inequality, and repression, equally belong to their proper cultural tradition and compromise their purported homogeneity from within. They should recognize, moreover, that the repression of these elements, necessary as it may be, tends to entail their re-emergence as a force that perverts its proper paradigm even more. The French government, recently trying to impede the repression of Muslim girls they took to be represented by their headscarves, could only do so by means of a law that many regarded as repressing their freedom of expression. The increasing influence of Christian fundamentalism, especially in the United States, also indicates that pre-modern elements continue to haunt the paradigm of modernity from within, if only by undermining the clear-cut distinction between the private and the public which is crucial to liberal politics. On the other hand, modern societies should equally attempt to recognize the positive elements of the cultural paradigm they oppose, such as the emphasis of the latter on values and practices that provide people with concrete means to make sense of their life.

Those who identify with a particular cultural minority, for their part, should not focus exclusively on the elements of modern societies they experience as threats, such as individualism, impiety, and moral corruption. Neither should they blindly identify with the guiding principles of their own tradition. Instead, they should attempt to shed those archaic elements of their own cultural paradigm that have lost their pertinence – whether tribalism, the repression of women, honour revenge, or female circumcision – and enhance those elements that allow individuals and groups to respond to the challenges posed by the contemporary world, whether tolerance, piety, decency, or religion.<sup>52</sup>

Since the relation between, on the one hand, the predominant culture represented by the state and, on the other, the cultural minorities it hosts is asymmetrical in many respects, it falls primarily to the state to create space for modes of self-reflection intended to thwart polarization. The logic of entanglement does not maintain that this depolarization is actually possible or impossible; the classical categories of modality are not suited for its purpose. It only entails that the dynamic which yields antagonistic conflicts is very difficult to resist, because this resistance requires a radical form of self-criticism. Thus, what it requires is the insight that no principle, regardless of its content, guarantees that its effects on human actions will be productive rather than destructive, nor that its productive effects will necessarily prevail. This holds true of religion, but no less of capitalism, democracy, the idea of universal human rights, or the principle of individual freedom. Such self-criticism becomes ever more difficult, it seems to me, the larger the scale of the contending cultural paradigms at stake. Paradigms meant to protect the interests of transnational civilizations – whether in religious, secular, or political terms – are much less likely to affirm the one-sidedness of the values to which they owe their force. We have seen that Hegel, for his part, hesitates to interpret the conflicts emerging within modern societies in light of their reconciliation. The logic of entanglement raises this hesitation into a philosophical perspective that complements the perspective elaborated in Hegel's speculative science, thus challenging its ubiquity. But let me return to Hegel's conception of world history one more time.

## 6. The Goal of World History

I argued above that Hegel's optimism mainly concerns the actualization of rational freedom that has occurred in the past, because he highlights only those moments in world history that testify to this actualization. On this view, episodes of loss, violence, and destruction are only relevant insofar as they yield less one-sided actualizations of freedom. We have also seen that Hegel is much more cautious with regard to his present time. This caution tends to be neglected, however, because he does not always clearly distinguish between the insight of the modern world into its ultimate principle and the actualization of this principle in the realm of objective spirit. As far as this insight is concerned, Hegel is justified – at least according to his own standards – in being as optimistic as he is about the past, for speculative science has, in his view, achieved the most profound comprehension of the principle of rational

freedom. This does not imply, however, that 'the fundamental reconciliation' of the spiritual and the actual world (RH 256/208) has already occurred in the element of objectivity, an element much more obstinate than that of pure thought. Hegel's remarks at the end of *Reason in History* are utterly ambivalent in this respect:

Freedom finds its concept in the actual world and *has transformed* the worldly sphere into an objective system that is concrete and structured organically.... It is the *goal* of world history that spirit create for itself a nature and world that conform to itself. (RH 256–57/208, my emphasis)

The same ambivalence pervades the end of the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. Hegel here points out that modernity need no longer project absolute self-consciousness onto a transcendent God, but can recognize this consciousness as its innermost principle. Yet he qualifies his account by noting twice that this *seems* to be the case:

It seems [*scheint*] as if world spirit has at last succeeded in ... apprehending itself as absolute spirit.... The struggle between finite and absolute self-consciousness comes to an end.... The whole of world history developed so far and the history of philosophy in particular exhibit this struggle, a struggle which seems [*scheint*] to have reached its aim ... there where spirit has realized itself as spirit. (LHP III, 460/551)

History, for Hegel, proves that this aim has been attained in principle. That is why he can relegate 'the work that still needs to be done' to 'the empirical side' alone.<sup>53</sup> Although the actualization of freedom in the element of externality may still take time, he notes,

temporal duration is something entirely relative, and spirit belongs to eternity.... The further work [of spirit] requires that this principle [i.e., the unity of the rational and the actual] develop itself, that spirit become actual, that it achieve consciousness of itself in the actual world. (RH 257/209)

These and other passages suggest that the reconciliation of the rational and the actual has as yet become 'for itself' in the element of pure thought alone.<sup>54</sup> Although Hegel refrains from predicting the future, the principle of absolute negativity entails that spirit will not rest until its



actual world conforms to its proper rationality. Thus, Hegel acknowledges the tension between, on the one hand, the essential actualization of rational freedom that has manifested itself in the past and, on the other, the incapacity of the modern world actually to conform to this its ultimate principle. He resolves this tension, however, by arguing that the further actualization of freedom is merely a matter of time. The abstract negativity proper to time may slow down the self-actualization of the concept, but it must, in the long run, comply with the absolute negativity proper to the latter. This dialectical determination of the relation between absolute and abstract negativity dissolves, to use Hegel's words, the negative into something subordinate and conquered (RH 48/42–43).

In the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel suggests that Plato was aware of the principle of individual freedom that began to emerge in Greek culture, yet was unable to incorporate this principle into his account of Greek ethical life:

Plato, aware that the ethics of his time were being penetrated by a deeper principle, which, within this context, could appear... only as a destructive force,... imagined he could counter [this] destructive force, and he thereby inflicted the gravest damage on the deeper drive behind it, namely, free infinite personality.<sup>55</sup>

Just as Plato recoiled from the principle of individual freedom, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* might be regarded as an attempt to counter its destructive force, a force that could only become a real threat once societies had embraced its modern determination. I hope to have shown that Hegel was well aware of the disruptive implications of the modern conception of freedom, especially of the unbridled capitalism that ensued from it. Yet his philosophical paradigm, constituted by absolute negativity, did not allow him to comprehend these implications in the same way as it allowed him to comprehend the past. Hegel grasped the essence of his age by transforming the conception of tragic conflicts articulated in Greek tragedy into the principle of his philosophical method. Almost 2500 years separate us from Sophocles' *Antigone*. More than two centuries separate us from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. As I see it, philosophy cannot come to terms with its own age without transforming their legacy.

# Conclusion

Part of Hegel's future has turned into our recent past. Given the struggle against dogmatism and feudalism that defined Hegel's present, it is not surprising that he should consider world history to exhibit the increasing actualization of freedom. I do not wish to contest this view. Yet a criticism of modernity which takes its bearings from Hegel cannot purport to be contemporary unless it responds to the sequel of events that have turned Hegel's philosophy into an irretrievable past. Although societies plunged into social, political, and economical disintegration have proved to be capable of evolving new modes of self-organization, it can no longer be taken for granted that the contemporary world will succeed in controlling the polarization between freedom and power, hospitality and security, universality and particularity, autonomy and heteronomy, the individual and the community, progress and tradition, prosperity and oppression, technology and ethics, reason and faith, nation and tribe. Processes of polarization cannot be thwarted, in my view, unless we take seriously the dynamic that produces and sustains binary oppositions in the first place.

It might be argued that modernity attempts to efface the conflicts between such contrary values either by letting them coexist or by subordinating the one to the other. Thus, modernity generally assumes that technological and ethical principles need not contradict one another. And if they do, it presupposes that their contradiction can be resolved by technical or political means. In the case of such contrary moments as nation and tribe, progress and tradition, or universality and particularity, modern democracies tend to identify with the former and project the latter onto those groups and cultures that do not assume the modern principle of freedom as their absolute principle. Yet by excluding the latter moments from their proper cultural paradigm, modern democracies

tend both to impoverish their proper paradigm and to enhance the polarization between the contrary cultural paradigms that define the contemporary world. It seems to me, moreover, that the efforts of modern nation states to oppose tribalism, fundamentalism, and oppression, enhance rather than vanquish the tribal, fundamentalist, and oppressive elements inherent in modernity itself.

If the actual world increasingly challenges the prevailing self-conception of late modernity, as I think it does, then philosophy should respond to this challenge by exposing the one-sidedness of modernity's basic paradigm. In this book I have tried to do this by deploying the conceptual resources of Hegel's view of tragic conflicts. I have argued that Hegel exposes, first, the tendency of thought to efface the mutual dependence of contrary moments in favor of rigid oppositions and, second, the risk this effacement entails. For, as Hegel shows, whenever persons, communities, societies, or theories appeal to a particular principle by identifying with one of its contrary moments, they will thereby convert the other into a hostile principle. By fighting this principle, they will, unknowingly, deprive their own paradigm of its force. I have also argued, however, that Hegel could only transform this insight into the principle of his method by recoiling from its unsettling implications. Accordingly, his philosophy of world history subordinates the eternal recurrence of tragic conflicts to the view that the principle of freedom increasingly actualizes itself in the element of temporal externality.

The logic of entanglement, conversely, intends to retrieve the unsettling implications of Hegel's conception of tragic conflicts, but to do so without resorting to pessimism. According to this logic, even the principle of freedom is a moment that contains its contrary – the moment of power – within itself and, moreover, depends on this moment in such a way that it always threatens to be corrupted by the proper force of the latter. This does not entail that freedom is necessarily corrupted by its contrary, but merely that its struggle against the proper force of its contrary is, by rights, undecidable. According to this logic, contrary determinations – whatever their content – depend on one another in such a way that neither is necessarily capable of establishing itself as the absolute principle of both.

Perhaps one need not tarry with Hegel as long as I have done to reach this insight. Had I, instead, turned to classical tragedy itself, I need not have abstracted from its intricate plots, subtle shifts and ironic ambiguities. Yet in that case I would not have been able to raise the essence of tragic conflicts into a principle formal enough to permit a critical reflection on purely conceptual oppositions as well, that is, oppositions such

as identity and difference, infinity and the finite, essence and appearance, form and matter, the inner and the outer, end and means, the organic and the inorganic, spirit and nature, mind and body. Like no one else, Hegel has shown that modernity tends to ignore the mutual implication of such contrary moments. As I see it, this tendency continues to pervade the self-understanding of our own time. For that reason I have deemed it necessary to follow, as far as possible, the way in which Hegel incorporated the tragic into the element of pure thought.

This book does not purport to surpass the various philosophical criticisms of modern reason evolved in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The logic of entanglement it unwinds out of Hegel's speculative science is rather intended to let contemporary philosophy achieve a deeper insight into the stakes of these criticisms and, hence, into its proper responsibility. This logic is not brought into play to replace the prevailing paradigm of modernity, but rather to expose its one-sidedness, following it wherever it goes. On this view, the space of reasons is not delimited by the sway of absolute negativity alone. The logic of entanglement rather entails that the space which allows human life to interpret itself is delimited by the irresolvable tension between tragic and absolute negativity. Hegel's philosophy, I have wished to show, contains its other – tragic negativity – as a germ it could not have developed without losing its tremendous force. This book is meant, then, to let this negativity, disturbing as it may be, unfold in the element of pure thought without thereby turning it into a hostile principle. Unknowingly, we may well have been embarked on this hazardous venture since Aeschylus wrote his first tragedies. It is time, perhaps, that philosophy follow in their wake.

# Notes

## Series Editor's Preface

1. The well-known history of the focus on the *Phenomenology* is defined in particular by two works initially published just after the conclusion of the Second World War: Alexander Kojève (1947) *An Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit* (1969 trans. by H.J. Nicols, Basic Books: New York) and Jean Hyppolite (1946) *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (1974 trans. by J. Heckman and S. Cherniak, Northwestern University Press: Evanston).
2. This perhaps offers a partial justification for the response of Gillian Rose to critics of Hegel. Cf. G. Rose (1984) *Dialectic of Nihilism* (Blackwell: Oxford and New York) and see the recent extended response to Rose's work in Vincent W. Lloyd (2008) *Law and Transcendence: On the Unfinished Project of Gillian Rose* (Palgrave Macmillan: London and New York).
3. In the focus on such a negative lesson from Hegel, the works of Adorno and Bataille have a peculiar and often unremarked relation.
4. This focus on the future of Hegel is the particular consideration of Catherine Malabou (1998) *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic* (2005 trans. by L. During, Routledge: London and New York), a work that belongs to the same new phase of reading Hegel as *On Hegel: The Sway of the Negative*.

## Introduction

1. I will use the term 'modernity' to denote not so much a well-defined historical period as a cultural, political, and scientific paradigm rooted in the emancipatory movement that unfolded during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The prevailing optimism of modernity, it might be argued, resides primarily in the assumption that knowledge and action are based on rational principles that by themselves guarantee their appropriate actualization. As I see it, this paradigm remains the prevailing world-view of liberal, democratic societies.
2. D 21/90. In a similar vein, Kolb (1986) argues that Hegel's philosophy contains a valuable criticism of the dichotomies that underlie modernity's prevailing self-description (50, 264–65). I do not know of any other book that draws on Hegel's *Science of Logic* to put forward such criticism. For Kolb, modernity is defined first of all by the attempts of individuals and societies at liberating themselves from any positive content imposed by traditional ways of life. Accordingly, his reading of the *Logic* focuses on the opposition between (universal) form and (particular) content and other oppositions treated in the *Doctrine of Essence*. Kolb convincingly relates Hegel's criticism of such conceptual oppositions to the modern dichotomy between tradition

- and individual freedom. Whereas Kolb endorses Hegel's *criticism* of modernity, Pippin (1997) employs Hegel's philosophy to *defend* the basic principles of modernity (7–8). I understand why Pippin employs Hegel's conception of freedom to oppose naturalistic accounts of normativity (11). However, by reducing any criticism of the 'space of reasons', among which postmodernism, to dogmatism (7), Pippin seems to advance a rather un-Hegelian variation of the classical opposition between reason and faith.
3. Desmond (1992) also stresses 'that one has to take very seriously the possibility that there are internal strains in Hegel's thought about which he may not have been self-conscious' (241). His sustained engagement with Hegel equally relies on a distinction between a predominant and a largely implicit tendency of speculative science. I fully endorse his view that 'Hegel's own thought, often against the grain of its explicit intentions, is the carrier of traces of otherness that... cannot be dialectically domesticated' (23, cf. 11). Whereas Desmond's reading of Hegel is concerned primarily with religious and artistic forms of alterity, my own focus is rather on the tragic conflicts that testify to the impossibility of thought to subordinate that which it defines as its other.
  4. Phen 26/19, cf. L II, 76/440–41. Hegel relates this divide to the 'separating activity' of the understanding and to the oppositions between subject and object, God and nature, understanding and sensibility to which it gave rise (25/19).
  5. As I argue in Chapter 3, Kant's doctrine of the antinomies equally contributed to Hegel's conception of absolute negativity. In this book I will not consider the view on conflicts and reconciliation Hegel developed in *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate* (1799–1800) and related early texts.
  6. 'No subject matter', Hegel notes in the *Logic*, 'is so absolutely capable of being expounded with a strictly immanent plasticity as is thought in its own necessary development' (L I, 31/40). The method of speculative science 'is therefore to be recognized... as the absolutely infinite force, to which no object, presenting itself as something external... and as independent of reason, could offer resistance' (L II, 551/826). Whereas Menke (1992) argues that Hegel's system purports to comprehend a reality it cannot incorporate (11–12, 55–56), it seems to me that this is only the case insofar as this method is applied to the realm of world history. Following Adorno, Menke argues that what escapes this method is an irreducible difference (12). Contrary to Menke, I will interpret this 'rest' in terms of the irreducible *entanglement* of contrary determinations.
  7. In his ground-breaking work on Derrida's critical transformation of modern philosophy, Gasché (1986) equally maintains that 'all criticism of reflection must take its standards from the Hegelian project and must measure up to the speculative solution given by Hegel' (75, cf. 77, 125). This does not entail, of course, that Hegel himself has always met his own criteria of philosophical criticism.
  8. L II, 250/580–81 Cf.: 'If the refutation is thorough, it is derived and developed from the principle itself, not achieved by contrary assertions and random thoughts from outside.' (Phen 18/13, cf. 64–65/53–54).
  9. Given the limits of this introduction I can only indicate the direction of such an assessment. I should note that the distinction between continental

and analytic philosophy that I here take for granted abstracts, first, from the fact that each tradition harbors widely diverging modes of philosophy and, second, from the various efforts that have been undertaken to bridge their gap.

10. As I will argue in Chapter 3, Hegel's conception of absolute negativity is hardly clarified by the expression 'negation of the negation' that he uses on several occasions. Heidegger refers to this expression in *Being and Time* without elaborating on it (433–35). In a later text on Hegel's concept of negativity he notes: 'Philosophy, insofar as it is absolute, un-conditioned, must incorporate negativity in a particular way, and yet by doing this, that is, it ultimately does not take it seriously.' (Heidegger 1993: 24). This text, written in 1938/39, was published only in 1993. Here and elsewhere, Heidegger is concerned to show that Hegel cannot comprehend this negativity as derived from any source whatsoever, and hence cannot acknowledge its limits. Adorno (1963) considers Hegel's conception of negativity to 'oscillate between the profoundest insight and its corruption' (162/160). This corruption occurs, in his opinion, insofar as Hegel identified 'the negation of the negation with positivity, ... thus raising the formal principle into its purest form'. In this way, he continues, 'the anti-dialectical principle which inhabits the very core of dialectics takes the upper hand' (161/158). Adorno, in turn, extricates what he considers to be Hegel's insight into the dialectic from this 'corruption' so as to confront philosophy with the non-identical that defies any generalization. One of Derrida's early texts, while drawing on Bataille, echoes the remark by Heidegger quoted above: 'Hegel, through *precipitation*, blinded himself to that which he had laid bare under the rubric of negativity.' (Derrida 1967: 381/259). In this book I cannot elaborate on the texts devoted to Hegel by Adorno, Heidegger, Derrida, and others, nor on the way in which they transformed Hegel's legacy to develop their proper philosophical perspectives. Insofar as Heidegger and Derrida are concerned, I have done this in De Boer (2000, 2001, and 2010c). My approach to Hegel shares common ground with the transformative readings presented by Nancy (1997) and Malabou (2005). Nancy, discarding the traditional view of Hegel's alleged metaphysics, interprets negativity as a principle of transformation that defines our own age no less than Hegel's (10/7). Nancy's approach makes it quite difficult, however, to get hold of those strands of Hegel's thought which, in my view, do call for criticism. Interpreting Hegel through the prism of the concept of plasticity, Malabou's engaging book aims 'to bring out the openness to the future, the openness to the event which is part and parcel of Hegel's philosophy' (191). See also the interesting collection of essays edited by Barnett (1998).
11. See on this Descombes (1979) and Butler (1987).
12. Adorno (1970) notes that his studies of Hegel do not claim to accomplish the 'elucidation of Hegel's main works, which remains a future task'. Limiting himself to preliminary reflections, the author admits that he 'stopped where one should actually begin', and apologizes for the 'obvious imperfections' that this approach entails (249/xxxv–xxxvi). Derrida (1972), for his part, remarks in an interview that 'it is still a question of elucidating the relationship to Hegel – a difficult labor, which for the most part remains before us, and which in a certain way is interminable' (59–60/43–44).

13. The post-analytic turn to Hegel in the United States has from the outset been intertwined with the turn to analytic philosophy in Germany. The encounter of both traditions has profited from the non-metaphysical readings of Hegel put forward since the 1970s. Among them are studies (partly) devoted to the *Science of Logic* by Hartmann (1976a), Pippin (1989), and Stekeler-Weithofer (1992a), to which I come back in Chapter 2.
14. In this regard I disagree with Brandom (2005), who does present his own work on Hegel as critical. Interestingly, Brandom argues that 'the strong holistic aspect' of Hegel's philosophy, that is, its systematic form as such, constitutes its 'discardable husk', while its 'viable conceptual core' is said to consist in Hegel's alleged view on the dynamic nature of empirical concepts (133). He thus reverses the classical distinction between the inner and the outer in a way that is possibly even more radical than Derrida's. I do not think, however, that Brandom's work on Hegel, for all its radicality, can therefore be defined as critical even by commonly accepted standards. See also Brandom (1999). See Houlgate (2006b) for a convincing account of the relation between Hegel and McDowell.
15. I do not wish to suggest, however, that the significance of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* has been overrated as such. My claim is rather, first, that a philosophical reflection on the concrete moments of human life, science and culture cannot bypass a critical investigation of the conceptual schemes that define the ways in which human beings have interpreted *themselves* and, second, that the *Logic* achieves such an investigation at a more fundamental level than the *Phenomenology*.
16. I will often refer to texts from the Jena period because I hold that Hegel during these years developed his decisive views. Since my approach is thematic rather than historical, I will not always elaborate on the differences between the early and later texts.

## 1 Tragedy

1. Lacoue-Labarthe (1989), among other commentators, also notes that 'a certain interpretation of tragedy' is 'the origin or the matrix of what...is conventionally called speculative thought' (208, cf. 217). His essay focuses on Schelling's and, notably, Hölderlin's contributions to the transformation of an aesthetic perspective on tragedy into the tragico-philosophical perspective characteristic of German Idealism as a whole. Whereas Hölderlin's reflections, in his view, touch upon 'something that dislocates *from within* the speculative' (227), Hegelian dialectics is said to favor sublation over disruption (208). Since the text hardly deals with Hegel, however, this suggestion remains somewhat gratuitous.
2. Philosophers such as Irigaray (1974), Mills (1996), and Butler (2000) have argued that Hegel's reading of the *Antigone* consolidates traditional hierarchical oppositions such as those between the feminine and the masculine, private and public, and body and spirit. It seems to me, however, that these feminist critiques underestimate the fact that Hegel's analysis of Greek ethical life pertains only to the immediate mode of ethical life, that is, to a mode that calls for its dissolution. Moreover, they do not take into account that



Hegel's remarks on the tragic conflict between Antigone and Creon do not run parallel to his account of the conflict between the sphere of the family and the sphere of the state. Finally, since Hegel's analysis is not intended as an interpretation of the *Antigone*, one cannot simply blame Hegel for having misinterpreted this play. See for a similar criticism De Boer (2003, 2009). See Hutchings (2003) for a clear account of these discussions.

3. According to Szondi (1978), the *Phenomenology of Spirit* places the tragic 'at the center of Hegelian philosophy and interprets it as the dialectic governing ethical life, or the spirit at its level as true spirit' (172/20). Szondi, conceiving of dialectics as encompassing both the tragic and its overcoming, further suggests that Hegel *identifies* the tragic and the dialectical (173/21). Although this is true, there is no reason to take this identification for granted, as Szondi seems to do. In order to comprehend the inherent limit of Hegelian dialectics one should rather begin, in my view, by distinguishing between a tragic and a dialectical interpretation of the conflict between contrary determinations. Hegel distinguishes two meanings of the term 'dialectic'. On the one hand, this term refers to the insight that the opposition between contrary moments is untenable. This opposition collapses because both contrary moments turn into their contrary. This – negative – use is in agreement with ancient skepticism. On the other hand, Hegel uses the term 'dialectic' to refer to the way in which the opposition between contrary moments is resolved (rather than dissolved). This resolution results from the movement in which both contrary moments give up their purported independence without therefore being annihilated. The *Encyclopedia* uses the term 'dialectic' for the negative moment of this resolution alone, referring to its positive outcome as the 'speculative' moment of logic (Enc I, §§ 81–82). The *Science of Logic*, on the other hand, identifies this speculative moment with the positive meaning of dialectics itself: 'The speculative consists in the dialectic as it is here understood, that is, in the grasping of opposites in their unity.' (L I, 52/56, cf. L II, 557–60/830–33). To emphasize the difference between the tragic and the dialectical strand of Hegel's account of tragedy, I will, in agreement with this passage, use the term 'dialectic' in its positive sense alone.
4. Menke (1996) also argues that Hegel's reflections on tragedy and the tragic, although intended to develop a philosophy of reconciliation, can be deployed for a critical, non-metaphysical theory of the tragic conflicts characteristic of modernity (25). He considers the tragic conflict between the universal and the particular to have reemerged in modernity as the conflict between social justice and authenticity. Although the title of his book is taken from Hegel's *Essay on Natural Law*, Menke hardly discusses this text, focusing instead on Hegel's readings of the *Antigone*. In a similar vein, Menke (2005) argues that the tragic remains relevant to contemporary culture in that it highlights the self-undermining nature of human action. Since, in Menke's view, this tragic irony cannot be divorced from its aesthetic representations, his book is largely devoted to analyses of ancient and modern tragedies.
5. I am aware that this philosophical approach to tragedy cannot do justice to the diversity of the topics it treats and the intricacies of its plots and language. In this respect, my approach to Greek tragedy is similar to Hegel's and, accordingly, very different from, for example, Nussbaum's. Whereas

Nussbaum (1986) uses Greek tragedy to offer a humanistic account of human life, I draw on Hegel's account of tragedy to criticize the prevailing optimism of modern culture. In my view, Nussbaum's reading of tragedy depends too much on Aristotle's views on tragedy and ethics to account for the disturbing implications of the conflicts represented in Greek tragedy.

6. These sciences, Hegel notes, occur in the realm of 'opposition and negativity, yet not in [the realm of] absolute negativity or infinity, which alone is proper to science' (NL 437/57).
7. 'Thus, two classes are formed in accordance with the absolute necessity of the ethical. One is the class of the free, the individual of absolute ethical life, of which the organs constitute the single individuals.... The other class consists of those who are not free; it exists in the difference of need and work.' (NL 489/99–100).
8. 'By overcoming this confusion of principles, and their established and conscious separation, each of them is done justice.' The reality of ethical life has now been brought about both as absolute indifference and as the – relative – opposition between the two ethical principles, in such a way 'that the second is restrained [*bezwungen*] by the first' (NL 494/104).
9. I do not use the term 'archaic' in a pejorative sense. Archaic systems of justice exhibit a rationality of their own, but this rationality does not ensue from a self-conscious process of deliberation. In my view, the opposition between 'religious' and 'secular' is even less suited to render the difference between these systems, because both systems interpreted themselves in religious terms. Interestingly, Vernant (1990) argues that the clash between these realms also manifests itself in the ambiguous use of legal terminology: 'The legal terminology is also used to convey the conflicts that exist between legal values and a more ancient religious tradition, the beginnings of a system of moral thought already distinct from the law, although the boundaries between their respective domains are not yet clearly drawn.' (38).
10. See on this De Beistegui (2000). De Beistegui's interesting article does not distinguish, however, between the ancient and modern forms of the inorganic nature of ethical life (cf. 18).
11. 'Spirit is the ethical life of a nation insofar as it is the immediate truth.... It must advance to the consciousness of what it is immediately... and by passing through a series of shapes attain to a knowledge of itself.' (Phen 290/265). In *Reason in History* Hegel maintains that the 'highest moment of a people consists in its spiritual consciousness of itself' (RH 177/146). This self-consciousness occurs as the insight into 'its basic principles, that which is general in its actual world' (177/146).
12. Aeschylus (1959: v. 1575).
13. At the end of *The Libation Bearers* the chorus asks whether Orestes will become the savior of Argos or rather bring death and destruction: 'Third is for the savior. He came. Shall I call it that, or death? Where is the end? Where shall the fury of fate be stilled to sleep, be done with?' (Aeschylus 1959: v. 1072–76).
14. Aeschylus (1959: v. 325).
15. NL 496/105. The passage is somewhat ambiguous: whereas the first part suggests that the entanglement of the two natures of ethical life is primordial, the second suggests that it is preceded by their undifferentiated unity. In

another passage Hegel considers the rational mode of ethical life to bring about their reconciliation by 'facing and objectifying the entanglement in the inorganic' (494–95/104), thereby also suggesting that this entanglement is primordial.

16. Hegel can do this, it might be argued, because in tragedies themselves the given content of ancient myths is already transformed in such a way that the significance of tragic conflicts exceeds the fate of its individual characters. According to Grene (1959), Aeschylus 'seizes on such truths as are most frequently a compromise between two opposites, and consequently the myths he uses most are those which tell of conflict on a cosmic scale.... To make myth universally significant, both characters and plot must correspond symbolically with characters and plot on one or more levels in addition to the myth in which they are embedded' (305).
17. Given the aim of this chapter I will not be able to elaborate on the details of Hegel's conception of Greek culture in the *Phenomenology*, nor on the various subtexts his account presupposes. See on this De Boer (2009).
18. Phen 301/275, 304/278. In my view, the conflict between the archaic and rational determinations of justice provided the model for the tragic representation of other conflicts possibly tearing apart the lives of individuals and societies. I therefore regard the conflict between the sphere of the family and the sphere of the state such as it is represented in Sophocles' *Antigone* primarily to concern the collision of these two determinations of justice, rather than that between women and men.
19. 'This ruin of the ethical substance... is thus determined by the fact that ethical consciousness is directed on to the law in a way that is essentially immediate. This determination of immediacy implies that nature as such enters into the ethical act.' (Phen 315/289, cf. 301/276).
20. Phen 308/282. Cf.: 'The original essence of tragedy consists in the fact that within such a conflict each of the opposed sides, if taken by itself, has *justification*; while each can establish the true and positive content of its own aim and character only by denying and infringing the equally justified power of the other.' (Aesth III, 523/1196).
21. 'The whole is a stable equilibrium of all the parts, and each part is a spirit at home in this whole, a spirit which does not seek its satisfaction outside itself but finds it within itself, because it is itself in balance with the whole.' (Phen 302/277, cf. 304/279).
22. Phen 309/283, cf. 482/446.
23. Phen 311/285. Miller misleadingly translates *Unterwerfung* as 'downfall'.
24. 'The ethical individuality is directly and intrinsically one with this its universal aspect... and is incapable of surviving the destruction of this ethical power by its opposite.' (Phen 310/284). The *Essay on Natural Law* equally suggests that natural ethical life manifests its absolute idea – the movement of absolute negativity – as yet 'in a distorted way' (NL 499/108).
25. I should add that many tragedies voice such contrary possibilities without straightforwardly taking a stand on them. Among those that end on a more or less optimistic note are *Philoctetes* and *Oedipus at Colonus* by Sophocles and *Ion* by Euripides. See Vernant (1990) for a similar view. Tragedy, he maintains, 'does not reflect [social] reality but calls it into question. By depicting it rent and divided against itself, it turns it into a problem.... The questions are posed but the tragic consciousness can find no satisfactory answers to

- them'. This is, according to Vernant, even true of the tragedies of Aeschylus, whom he considers to be 'the most optimistic of the tragic writers' (33). Thus, every tragedy enacts a debate with a past 'still close enough for the clash of values to be a painful one and for this clash still to be currently taking place' (33). Barker (2009) equally distinguishes between tragedy as affirming persistent conflicts and tragedy as affirming the reconciliation of contraries. However, since he one-sidedly attributes the first view to the Greeks themselves and the second to Hegel, his ensuing criticism of the latter is rather unconvincing, especially when linking Hegel's philosophical optimism to his institution-centered politics.
26. It might be argued that Heraclitus – one generation before Aeschylus – was the only philosopher to articulate the essentially tragic character of reality as such. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche depicts Socrates as the first philosopher to have subdued the destructive elements of the tragic. Socrates' eye 'was debarred from ever looking with pleasure into the abysses of the Dionysiac' (Nietzsche 1980: 92/68). Cf.: 'Socrates, the dialectical hero in Platonic drama, recalls the related nature of the Euripidean hero who must defend his actions with reasons and counter-reasons and thereby is often in danger of losing our tragic sympathy; for who could fail to notice the *optimistic* element in the essence of dialectics, which celebrates jubilantly at each conclusion reached, and which can only breathe where there is cool clarity and consciousness.' (94/69–70). Schmidt (2001) distinguishes between tragedy as a 'form of art in which . . . human life is liquid contradiction confronting the weight of destiny' and 'philosophy which searches for a way to stabilize this liquidity of human life, thereby assimilating and taming the elemental claims of tragic art' (274). This clear-cut distinction fails to take into account, in my view, that the tendency to tame tragic conflicts is inherent in tragedies themselves.
  27. Kaufmann (1968) also argues that 'the tragic poet whose worldview most closely resembled Hegel's was Aeschylus. One could not wish for more perfect illustrations of collisions in which neither side is simply wicked . . . than we find in the *Oresteia* and *Prometheus*' (203). At the same time, Kaufmann, in agreement with Vernant, considers Aeschylus as the most optimistic of the tragic poets and therefore in a way – not unlike Hegel – as anti-tragic (165, cf. 176f.). Kaufmann resolves this paradox by arguing that 'what is decisive is not the end but whether we participate in tremendous, terrifying suffering' (181). In my view, this (Aristotelian) emphasis on the psychological effect of tragedies forecloses a philosophical understanding of the various ways in which Greek tragedies respond to the experience of clashing perspectives and values.
  28. In *The Eumenides* the Furies claim repeatedly that they deserve to be honored because of their old age. They call Apollo a 'young god' who has 'ridden down powers gray with age' by taking Orestes away from them (Aeschylus 1959: v. 150, cf. v. 728, 778–79).

## 2 Logic

1. Among those who have contributed to this shift are Hartmann (1976a), Pinkard (1979), and Pippin (1989). Pippin's 'non-metaphysical'

interpretation of Hegel rightly contends that the *Science of Logic* does not pertain to a reality existing independently of thought, but to 'thought's attempt to determine a priori what can be a possible thought of anything at all' (184). I agree with Pippin that one cannot understand Hegel unless one understands Hegel's engagement with Kant (13). Yet by arguing that the unity of self-consciousness constitutes the 'original source of Hegel's hermetic claim about thought's self-determination' (232) Pippin to my mind ignores, first, that Hegel takes the Kantian notion of self-consciousness to be nothing more than the concrete manifestation of the pure concept and, second, that Kant's transcendental philosophy, though radically critical of the dogmatic metaphysics of his day, does not abandon the possibility of a critical ontology at all. See Houlgate (2006a: 142) for a similar criticism. Contrary to Pippin, Fulda (1988) considers the *Critique of Pure Reason* to pave the way for a critical ontology, that is, for an investigation into the conditions of possibility of any object of experience (60). According to Fulda, Hegel appropriates this notion of ontology in the *Science of Logic* (61). I fully endorse his view that Kant develops his critical ontology primarily by means of an examination of the human understanding (61), while Hegel examines pure concepts as they are in themselves. One might view Pippin and Fulda as interpreting Hegel in view of two different tendencies in Kant's critical philosophy. On the one hand, Kant focused on the role of transcendental apperception, on the other hand, he attempted to comprehend the pure concepts constitutive of possible objects of experience. I agree with Fulda that Hegel reduced the first tendency to a subordinate moment, while achieving the latter in a much more radical way than Kant.

2. In this respect, as in others, my approach shares common ground with the admirable study of Longuenesse (2007), who also reads Hegel from the perspective of Kant, yet focuses on Hegel's transformative critique of metaphysics rather than on epistemological issues (cf. 15). The first to have proposed a non-metaphysical interpretation of Hegel was Hartmann (1976a). In his view, Hegel's *Logic* is an ontology that takes the form of a 'theory of categories or of such determinations of the real as permit reconstruction' (104, cf. 110). I basically agree with this point of view. See also Hartmann (1976b) and Duquette (1990). Whereas Hartmann seems to apply the term of ontology only to Hegelian logic, White (1983) determines ontology in general as the doctrine of categories, and transcendental ontology as presenting these categories as the conditions of possibility of experience (5–6, cf. 78). Interestingly, he refers to the *Science of Logic* as 'Hegelian transcendental ontology' (3, cf. 71), an ontology distinguished from Kant's in that it pertains to the conditions of possibility of thought as such, thus including those of transcendental philosophy itself (5). This view is in agreement with Pinkard (1979: 418). Whereas Houlgate (2006a) also maintains that 'Kant's transcendental logic... anticipates Hegel's ontological logic', he differs from commentators such as White and Pinkard by claiming that Hegel's ontological logic is concerned with the nature of being as such (124). In my opinion, he thereby underestimates the fact that Hegel treats 'being' primarily as a pure concept that allows thought to constitute something as an object of knowledge. The term 'being' therefore cannot be identified with (the ultimate principle) of reality or the world such as it is given. Other

metaphysical readings of Hegel include Peperzak (2001) and Stern (2009). See Kreines (2006) for an evaluation of the debate between metaphysical and non-metaphysical interpretations of Hegel. Whereas, according to Kreines, non-metaphysical readings take Hegel to be merely concerned with concepts or conceptual schemes, the metaphysical reading he endorses affirms that Hegel's philosophy includes an account of 'what truly exists' and of 'the absolute' (468, 471, 472). In my view, this metaphysical reading ignores the fact that the *Logic* treats concepts such as existence and the absolute as limited determinations of the concept as such. Although Kreines rightly notes that non-metaphysical readings tend to underestimate Hegel's philosophical ambitions (468), I take the view that Hegel aims to achieve not so much purely rational knowledge of reality (convincingly precluded by Kant) as comprehensive knowledge of such conceptual determinations as have been developed throughout the history of human thought (a mode of knowledge not precluded by Kant's criticism of metaphysics).

3. In *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel identifies reason both with the productive imagination and the transcendental unity of apperception (FK, 305/70, cf. 308/73). I will not elaborate on this issue.
4. This chapter considers the relation between Hegel's *Logic* and the history of philosophy – ignored by non-metaphysical and metaphysical readings of Hegel only in general terms. Whereas Chapter 3 considers this relation in more detail, Chapter 4 centers on the question of Hegel's method.
5. Kant repeatedly notes in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that this work prepares the elaboration of an encompassing system of pure reason (cf. A xx–xxi, B xxiii–xxiv, B 27–28, B 735). Since this system was supposed to contain the totality of a priori concepts and principles, it may well have resembled Hegel's *Logic* much more closely than the *Critique* itself. However, in this chapter I will follow Hegel's own understanding of Kant's position, which he seems to identify with the critical, preparatory strand of Kant's project.
6. D 21/90, cf. 27–28/96, FK 302/67–68.
7. 'In transcendental intuition all opposition is sublated, all distinction between the construction of the universe by and for the intelligence, and the construction of the universe as an organization intuited as objective and appearing independent, is nullified. Speculation produces the consciousness of this identity.' (D 43/111).
8. D 22/91, cf. 21/90, FK 305–08/69–73, 364/125. Generally, Hegel regards the understanding as the 'activity of separation' (Phen 25/18).
9. 'In the struggle of the understanding with reason the understanding gains strength only to the extent that reason forsakes itself.' (D 24/93). Ultimately, reason forces the understanding to give itself 'the law of self-destruction' (28/96, cf. 30/97–98, Enc I, § 32, add.). This self-destruction of the understanding – insofar as it has turned into philosophy – is at stake in Kant's doctrine of the antinomies.
10. FK 318/81–82. Hegel here ignores Kant's distinction between the pure *origin* of ideas and concepts and the possible application of the latter; according to Kant, reason only lacks the capacity to *determine* the ideas it begets.
11. Already in the *Differenzschrift* Hegel notes that speculative thought must abstract from the subjective character of transcendental intuition in order to raise it into the true identity of subject and object (D 69/133). This

view reemerges in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*: 'Thoughts become fluid when ... pure self-certainty abstracts from itself.' (Phen 27/20). According to the *Logic*, Kant's extremely important thought 'that there are synthetic judgments a priori ... contains the beginning of a true apprehension of the nature of the concept'. This nature consists in being divided within itself (L II, 260–61/589). Cf.: 'Kant's notion of *synthetic a priori judgments* – the notion of ... an identity which is in itself an inseparable difference – belongs to what is great and imperishable in his philosophy' (L I, 240/209). The term 'pure concept' is used in Jen II, 205 and Jen III, 3, 262/182; the term 'absolute concept' already occurs in *Faith and Knowledge* (FK 345/107, 350–51/112). In the *Phenomenology* Hegel explicitly uses these terms, as well as 'the concept', to refer to the absolute principle of speculative science (cf. Phen 19/14, 42/34, 48/40, 115/100).

12. L I, 27/37, cf. 59–61/62–63, Enc I, § 41.
13. L I, 16/27, cf. Enc I, § 24.
14. Cf. Kant, CPR, B 303.
15. See De Boer (2010a) for a discussion of Kant's conception of ontology, metaphysics, and transcendental philosophy.
16. Since the *Science of Logic* mostly abstracts from the question concerning the possible application of the pure concepts, it does not become clear at first sight that these concepts constitute ontological perspectives, that is, make it possible to determine something as an object of knowledge. However, Hegel notes that the concept of finitude allows us to *speak about things* in a certain way: 'When we say of things that *they are finite*, we understand thereby that ... non-being constitutes their nature and being.' (L I, 139/129). In this regard I agree with the analytical approach to Hegel's *Logic* put forward by Stekeler-Weithofer (1992b). In his view, the *Logic* reflects on the meaning of the forms of expression that we use to determine objects, abbreviating these forms to substantives such as 'being' or 'becoming' (145). Reading the *Logic* in light of the linguistic turn, he regards the categories, on the one hand, as expressing an intersubjective *criterion* for determining something in a particular way (151, 166) and, on the other, as summarizing a particular *class* of expressions (187). Refreshing as it is, this approach seems to ignore that Hegel is as much as Kant concerned with the pre-linguistic *conditions of possibility* of knowledge. The category of the idea, for example, cannot simply be 'elucidated' by defining it as the way in which we express the whole of connections characteristic of our life (Stekeler-Weithofer 1992a: 414).
17. L I, 59/60, cf. Kant, CPR, B 79–80.
18. L I, 17/28, 20/31, 45/51.
19. 'The assertion that the categories taken by themselves are empty is ungrounded, for they owe their content, if to nothing else, to the fact that they are *determined*. Of course the content of the categories is not perceptible to the senses ...; but that is to be considered a merit rather than a defect.' (Enc I, § 43, add., cf. L I, 42/48). Hegel's presentation of Kant's position is not really fair. According to Kant, the content of transcendental logic consists in the rules that make it possible to determine something as an object rather than in the concepts constitutive of these rules (CPR, B 79–80). These rules presuppose, for Kant, that pure concepts are bound to the corresponding



determinations of time. Thus, Kant never meant to say that all contents of thought derive from sense perception.

20. Kant refers in particular to Leibniz's 'intellectual system of the world' (CPR, B 326–27, cf. B 303).
21. L I, 61/63, cf. Kant, CPR, B 326.
22. L I, 61–62/64, cf. Enc I, § 41, add. 1.
23. L I, 38/45, cf. Enc I, § 28.
24. L II, 559–60/833, cf. L I, 29/39, 43/49, Enc I, § 41, add. 2. Hegel here explicitly distinguishes between, on the one hand, things [*Dinge*], and, on the other, the matter at hand [*Sache*], which he equates with the concept of things. Only the latter is said to constitute the content of logical science.
25. The *Phenomenology* emphasizes this continuity between transcendental philosophy and speculative science as follows: 'The absolute concept is the category: in this concept knowing and the object of knowing are identical.' (Phen 361/333, cf. L II, 549/824, 551/826).
26. L I, 43/49, 60/62–63.
27. L I, 20/31, cf. L I, 30/39, Enc III, § 462.
28. L I, 60/62–63, cf. 27/37, 28/38.
29. L I, 26–27/37. In 'the element of knowledge ... the moments of spirit spread themselves out in that form of simplicity which knows its object as its own self. ... Their movement, which organizes itself in this element into a whole, is *Logic* or *speculative philosophy*' (Phen 29/22, cf. 48/40).
30. Enc II, § 246, add., cf. L I, 30/39.
31. L I, 41/48, cf. 17/28, 49/54, L II, 252/582, D, 47/116, 111/170. Among commentators who have highlighted the immanent nature of Hegel's speculative method are Nuzzo (2005) and Houlgate (2006a). According to Houlgate, Hegel's philosophy 'is purely a priori and immanent' (100) and merely presupposes 'a self-critical openness of mind on the part of the philosopher' (60). Houlgate thus turns against those commentators who, from Schelling onward, have argued that 'its structure depends upon factors outside of philosophy itself' such as the idea of the absolute or language (100, cf. 55, 72). I completely agree with Houlgate that criticisms of Hegel along the lines of Schelling and Marx tend to be based on a rather limited understanding of Hegel's *Logic*. I hold the view, however, that it is crucial to specify *in which sense* Hegel's *Logic* is presuppositionless. A first distinction to be drawn is that between, on the one hand, the pure concepts that provide the *Logic* with its *material* and, on the other, the *method* by dint of which the totality of these concepts is reconstructed in the element of pure thought. Similarly, Hegel's philosophy of nature 'takes up the matter which physics makes available to it on the basis of experience ... and transforms it once more, and this without relying on experience as ultimate validation' (Enc II, § 246, add.). As I see it, Hegel at the beginning of the *Logic* requires of the reader to abandon such unwarranted presuppositions as characterize philosophies dominated by the understanding. Yet this does not preclude, it seems to me, the *Logic* setting out from a particular principle – the concept – which only toward the end of the *Logic* manifests itself as it is in and for itself. I elaborate on the circular structure of Hegel's *Logic* and system in Chapter 5.3.



32. '[O]nly in its concept does something possess actuality [*Wirklichkeit*], and to the extent that it is distinct from its concept it ceases to be actual.' (L I, 44/50, cf. Enc I, § 6).
33. L II, 505/789, cf. 268–69/595, L I, 40–41/47, 60/63.
34. L I, 61/63. Cf.: 'The concept, when it has developed into a *concrete existence* that is itself free, is none other than the *I* or pure self-consciousness... [T]he *I* is the pure notion itself which, as concept, has come into *existence*... It is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the *unity* which constitutes the *nature of the concept* is recognized as the original synthetic unity of *apperception*, as unity of the *I* think, or of self-consciousness.' (L II, 253–54/583–84, cf. 490/777). We are justified 'in referring to the nature of the *I* in order to learn what the concept is' (255/585). For Hegel, however, this nature itself is nothing but 'the pure self-related unity' that is at once 'self-related negativity' (253/583, cf. 487/774). Contrary to Pippin (1989) I would argue, therefore, that the way in which self-consciousness achieves the synthetic unity of its contrary determinations is merely a particular manifestation of the concept as such.
35. L I, 30/39, cf. L II, 295/617.
36. L I, 26–27/37, cf. L II, 563/835, Phén 48/40.
37. L I, 27/37. Hegel also refers to this process as 'the inner self-movement of the content of the logic' (49/53).
38. 'But it is just this necessity itself... which proceeds for us, as it were, behind the back of consciousness.' (Phén 68/56, cf. Enc I, § 25).
39. 'In this identity of interior and exterior, the latter subject to the former, the soul is actual: in its corporeity it has its free shape, in which it feels itself and makes itself felt.' (Enc III, § 411, cf. Enc I, § 32, add., § 216, § 218, L I, 258/223–24). It should be noted that Hegel's remarks here concern the soul as conceived by dogmatic metaphysics and not the concept of the soul that occurs in his philosophy of spirit.
40. L I, 74/74, cf. Phén 49/40–41. The *Logic* also states that the concept of the infinite can be conceived as a definition of the absolute (L I, 149/137), and that the saying that the absolute, or God, is the measure of all things, is infinitely truer than the definition that equates the absolute with being (390/329). The *Encyclopedia* likewise notes that 'being' can be considered to constitute the most abstract and poorest definition of the absolute (Enc I, § 86, add., cf. § 85). This is also true of the concept of nothingness (§ 87). Contrary to the unity of being and non-being, that is, to becoming, these concepts have not yet established themselves at all as the synthetic unity of their contrary determinations and therefore can hardly count as definitions of the absolute.
41. The *Logic* does not explicitly state this, but limits itself to determining 'being' as the first content of pure knowledge (L I, 72/73). The *Phenomenology of Spirit* notes of sense-certainty: 'All that it says about what it knows is just that it is; and its truth contains nothing but the sheer being of the thing.' (Phén 69/58). The relation of thought to given representations – expressed in language – is thus primarily made possible by the ontological perspective grounded in the concept of being.
42. 'Becoming is this immanent synthesis of being and nothing.' (L I, 100/96).

43. I will not elaborate here on the further modifications of the ontological perspective constituted by the unity of being and non-being. These modifications achieve ever richer determinations of the pure concept itself and allow thought to comprehend its objects in terms of their qualitative and quantitative determinations.
44. Enc I, § 85. Cf.: 'The forms of *determinate being* [*Dasein*] find no place in the series of those determinations which can be regarded as definitions of the absolute,' for they are 'posited only as determinate and finite forms' (L I, 149/137). The 'forms of determinate being' seem to refer to conceptual determinations that can only be assigned to finite things: 'Determinate being is therefore the sphere of difference, of dualism, the field of finitude . . .; quality, otherness, limit – like reality, being-in-itself, the ought, and so on – are the imperfect guises of the negation in being.' (174/157).
45. The *Logic* characterizes the understanding as a mere external or incomplete mode of reflection, that is, a reflection that only posits contrary conceptual determinations over against each other. Cf. L I, 16–17/27–28, 38/45, 140/130, 160/145, 166–70/150–52; L II, 285–88/610–12, Phn 25/18.
46. I limit myself here to what I consider to be the principle of Hegel's exposition of the concept of causality. Distinguishing between formal and finite causality, the *Logic* maintains that only the first is characterized by necessity: 'Only as this necessity is cause self-moving, beginning from itself without solicitation from an other.' (L II, 224/559). Formal causality 'is the infinite relation of absolute power whose content is pure manifestation of necessity. As finite causality, on the other hand, it has a *given* content and occurs merely as a difference external to this identical content, which in its determinations is one and the same substance' (225/560, cf. Enc I, § 153).
47. 'It is certainly the case that finite things have to be determined only by finite predicates, and in doing this the understanding finds its proper application.' (Enc I, § 28, add.)
48. See Houlgate (1986: 102, 136–37).
49. L II, 559–60/833. The second edition of the *Logic* devotes two extended remarks to the Kantian antinomies. These 'remarks' concern the antinomy of indivisibility and divisibility (L I, 216–27/190–99) and of limitation and non-limitation (271–76/234–38). Hegel, as always, here distinguishes between Kant's 'great merit' (L I, 216/190) and his misleading elaboration of the antinomies. He basically argues that the antinomies are grounded not so much in the inappropriate application of pure concepts as in these concepts themselves: 'In order to gain the antinomy in its purity and to deal with it in its simple concept, the determinations of thought must not be taken in their application to and entanglement in the general idea of the world, of space, time, matter, etc. . . . These determinations . . . must be considered purely on their own account, since they alone constitute the essence and the ground of the antinomies.' (L I, 217/191, cf. Enc I, § 48 and § 48, rem.). See Llewelyn (1987) for a general discussion of Hegel's critique of Kant's antinomies. I come back to this issue in Chapter 3.7 and Chapter 4.2.
50. 'When those determinations of thought which are only external forms are truly considered in themselves, this can only result in demonstrating their finitude and the untruth of their supposed independent self-subsistence.' (L I, 30/39). The *Phenomenology* refers to this speculative mode of thought

as an 'apparent inactivity which merely contemplates how that which is distinguished moves itself and returns into its unity' (Phen 528/490, cf. 65/54).

51. L II, 551/826. Some passages in this section misleadingly suggest that this reality somehow transcends the sphere of conceptual thought. Thus, Hegel states that the absolute idea alone, that is, 'the rational concept that in its reality coincides only with itself', 'is *being*, imperishable *life*, *self-knowing truth*, and . . . *all truth*' (549/824), terms that are traditionally used with regard to the mode of pure thought attributed to God. In accordance with this tradition, the term 'being' as used by Hegel does not refer to the sphere of independent beings, but to a specific feature of all thought. Being, Hegel notes, 'is precisely this abstract self-relation' (554/828).

### 3 Negativity

1. Henrich (1978) contends that Hegel, in order to comprehend beings as characterized by negation, transforms the abstract negation proper to the level of statements into an independent ontological principle (216–17). Arguing that the same holds for the double negation (217), he concludes that Hegel's conception of negativity is derived from a form proper to negative statements and is then used to define concepts such as 'being-for-itself' and 'subjectivity' (223). I agree with Henrich that in order to understand Hegelian dialectics one cannot take the concept of the self-negating negation for granted. I will argue in this chapter, however, that Hegel does not derive his conception of absolute negativity from a mode of negation proper to statements, but rather attempts to interpret concepts such as 'not', 'nothing', and 'double negation' as inadequately manifesting the principle of absolute negativity. In my view, Hegel has recourse to these guises of the negative not so much to develop his conception of absolute negativity as to connect it to the ways in which negativity has traditionally been conceptualized.
2. See Bonsiepen (1977) for a clear account of the modes of negativity that occur in the Jena writings. Bonsiepen notes that '[w]hereas the *Phenomenology* treats the determinate negation with respect to consciousness, the *Science of Logic* exhibits the intertwinement of the various forms of negativity as such. A critique of Hegel's logic should therefore set itself the task of investigating in more detail the determinate negation with respect to the various forms of negativity' (187). I agree with Bonsiepen's conclusion that Hegel fails to account for a negativity that might deepen the experiences of discord rather than dissolve them (193–94).
3. In this respect, Hegel's *Science of Logic* can be considered to carry out the task of a 'history of pure reason' to which Kant refers at the very end of the first *Critique* (B 880–84). Like Hegel after him, Kant wishes to expose the various determinations of the idea of philosophy without taking into account the temporal dimension of the changes that metaphysics went through (B 881). Unlike Hegel, Kant never accomplished this task.
4. In philosophy 'pure thought is seized and has become an object to itself' (Enc I, § 86 add. 2).

5. 'The history of philosophy is the history of the discovery of the thoughts about the absolute, which constitutes its object.' (Enc I, 22). This passage occurs in the foreword to the second edition (1827), which is not included in the English edition. Cf.: 'In the history of philosophy we find the different stages of the logical idea in the form of successive philosophical systems, each of which is based on a specific definition of the absolute.' (Enc I, § 86, add. 2).
6. Enc I, § 14. The term 'philosophy' here seems to refer to Hegel's logic. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* Hegel likewise distinguishes between logical philosophy and history of philosophy. Whereas the latter pertains to the development of pure thought insofar as it occurred without consciousness of the necessary sequence of its determinations, the former consists precisely in recognizing and exposing this necessity (LHP I, 48/29). Cf.: 'I maintain that the sequence in the systems of philosophy in history is similar to the sequence in the logical deduction of the conceptual determinations of the idea. I maintain that if the basic concepts of the systems appearing in the history of philosophy be entirely divested of what regards their outward form, ... one would retain the various stages of the determination of the idea itself as regards its logical concept.' (49/30, cf. 357/302, Phn 6/3).
7. Hegel further contends that both the *Logic* and the history of philosophy necessarily begin with the most abstract determination of the absolute so as to develop ever more concrete determinations of it (cf. Enc I, § 86, add. 2).
8. L I, 90–91/88. This passage occurs in one of the many remarks included in the *Logic*. Whereas the main texts treat pure concepts such as they are in themselves, as it were, the remarks treat the same contents by considering the way in which they actually have been conceived in the history of philosophy.
9. Enc I, § 86, cf. L I, 98/94.
10. Enc I, § 88 add., cf. LHP I, 56/37. Hegel clearly assumed that Parmenides' texts were written before those of Heraclitus. Whereas Parmenides and Heraclitus were contemporaries, Parmenides probably reacted against earlier Ionian philosophers who held the view that everything is constantly changing. See Coplestone (1962).
11. L I, 111–12/105, cf. 100/96.
12. Hegel notes with regard to 'being' and 'nothing' that each of them 'is in itself the opposite of itself' (L I, 112/106). This only becomes manifest, however, in the concepts 'coming-to-be' and 'ceasing-to-be'. The beginning of the *Doctrine of Being* is so difficult to understand because Hegel here – just as in the *Phenomenology* – articulates the position of the understanding without as yet exposing the logical principle that forces contrary conceptual determinations to give up their purported independence. The only way for the understanding to grasp the untenability of conceptual oppositions consists in considering an abstract conceptual determination in such a way that it turns into its contrary. It is important to distinguish this abstract, sceptical way of collapsing conceptual distinctions from the speculative method which, at this stage, has not yet become 'for us'.
13. The contradiction is 'the negative in its essential determination, the principle of all self-movement. ... Something is therefore alive only insofar as it contains a contradiction within it, and moreover is this power to hold

- and endure the contradiction within it' (L II, 76/440, cf. Phen 26/19, LHP I, 41/22).
14. Cf. Phen 65/54. Hegel considers absolute knowing to be a 'seeming inactivity' (Phen 528/490). 'Insofar as pure being is taken as the *content* of pure knowing', he notes, 'the latter must stand back from its content, leaving it to its own devices and not determining it further' (L I, 72/73). The sole contribution of pure thought (Phen 67/55) consists in considering a mode of thought from the perspective of absolute negativity, that is, as the implicit unity of its contrary determinations and the urge to actualize this unity.
  15. L I, 131/122. The distinction between that which something is in itself and the way in which it has actually been posited can be compared to the distinction that is made in the *Phenomenology* between that which is 'for us' and that which is merely 'for it', provided that the former perspective not only pertains to that which something is in itself, but rather to the movement in which it actualizes its immanent determinations: 'What has thus arisen exists *for it* only as an object; *for us*, it appears at the same time as movement and as a process of becoming.' (Phen 68/56).
  16. As will become clear in Section 5, this obtains of those concepts that are treated in the *Doctrine of Being* and the *Doctrine of Essence*.
  17. Cf. Enc I, § 111, add.
  18. See Chapter 2.9; cf. also LHP I, 357/302.
  19. 'The analysis of the beginning would thus yield the concept of the unity of being and non-being – or, in a more reflected form, ... the identity of identity and non-identity.' (L I, 74/74, cf. D 96/156).
  20. L I, 104/99, cf. Jen III, 3, Enc I, § 87. I will argue in Chapter 5.3 that Hegel owes the idea of philosophy as free repetition to Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800).
  21. See Butler (1996) for a detailed account of the relation between Hegel's *Logic* and the actual history of philosophy. Since Butler assumes that Hegel's reconstruction of the logical order must parallel the temporal order, he can only clarify the apparent lack of correspondence between both levels by suggesting, for instance, that Aristotle's philosophy is treated in the *Doctrine of Essence* rather than the *Doctrine of Being* because of its enormous influence in the Middle Ages. He admits, however, that 'a certain lack of correspondence remains unexplained by this hypothesis' (308). Rightly contesting the widespread criticism of Hegel's alleged 'parallelism', Fulda (2007) argues that Hegel never suggests that the content of the *Logic* and the actual history of philosophy run parallel in all respects. Although he mentions Hegel's reference to the various stages of the determination of 'the idea in its logical concept' (6, cf. LHP I, 49/30), he fails to comprehend this idea as logical idea, that is to say, as the mode of the concept that constitutes the subject matter of the *Logic*. Seen from this latter perspective, it becomes clear, first, that the spheres of being, essence, and the concept constitute the various stages of this logical idea and, second, that Hegel's reconstruction of the concepts that have emerged during the history of philosophy takes its bearings from this threefold distinction.
  22. Drawing on Lukács' *The Young Hegel*, Forster (1998) offers an interpretation of Hegel's *Phenomenology* along the same lines. Forster convincingly argues,

in my view, that the trajectory of the *Phenomenology* consists of three different circles, each of which treats the history of human culture from a different perspective (296, cf. 447). Whereas the first circle considers forms of consciousness without taking into account the cultural and political communities within which they emerged, the second circle addresses 'the social contexts within which the shapes of consciousness dealt with in the earlier chapters occurred' (446, cf. 462). The third circle, finally, addresses forms of thought that explicitly reflect on the ultimate principle of thought as such, that is, art, religion, and absolute knowing itself. As I see it, the continuity between these three circles by no means precludes each circle from treating the whole, albeit that they can do so only from a particular perspective. As I argue in Chapter 5.3, this idea also sheds new light on the relation between the three parts of the system articulated in the *Encyclopedia*. Whereas Houlgate (2006a) argues that the *Logic*, due to its presuppositionless beginning, succeeds in warding off the 'specter of vicious circularity' (111), I rather hold that the *Logic* owes its immense force to a 'virtuous' circularity.

23. Although these contrary conceptual determinations depend on one another, they have not completely given up their independence. Thus, Hegel notes, the relation between the whole and its parts 'contains the independence of the sides and equally their resolution, and contains both in a *single* relation. ... [E]ach side, while being independent, is completely relative to an other.' (L II, 167/514, cf. 170/517).
24. That is why Hegel attributes the concepts which Kant calls concepts of reflection to the sphere of the concept of essence. Both Kant and Hegel can be considered to transform the metaphysical conception of these pure concepts. Kant did so, in my view, by arguing that conceptual oppositions such as identity and difference, inner and outer, or matter and form, allow thought to determine whether a judgment pertains to an object qua *noumenon* or qua *phenomenon* (cf. CPR, B 316). Seen from Hegel's perspective, this reflection can be considered to establish the difference between essence and appearance. Hegel, for his part, considers reflection to pertain to the act by means of which the sphere of essence *itself* opposes its contrary determinations: 'Essence in this its self-movement is reflection.' (L II, 24/399). In his view, the concepts of reflection distinguished by Kant are nothing but different modes of the general distinction between essence and appearance (L II, 33/406). See on this De Boer (2010a, 2010b). See Longuenesse (2007) for a detailed and illuminating account of Hegel's treatment of the concepts of reflection in the *Doctrine of Essence*.
25. '[T]he world as it is in itself posits itself over against ... the world of appearances. But that which appears and that which is essential are nothing outside of their relation. ... That which appears manifests the essential, and the essential is insofar as it appears. – The relation is the still imperfect union of reflection-into-otherness and reflection-into-self.' (L II, 125/480, cf. 166–68/513–15, 170/516–17).
26. Hegel conceives of 'actuality' as the 'perfect interpenetration' of essence and appearance (L II, 125/480, cf. 201/542, 166/513, 187/530).
27. L II, 248–49/580, cf. Phen 14/9–10.
28. L I, 386/325, cf. 92/90.

29. I consider Hegel's treatment of teleology in Chapter 8.
30. L II, 548–49/824, Enc I, §§ 236–37.
31. L II, 563/835–36, cf. Phen 26/19. The *Encyclopedia* maintains that 'the essence of spirit is therefore freedom, that is, the absolute negativity of the concept as self-identity' (Enc III, § 382).
32. Cf. L I, 124/115–16, 150/137.
33. Cf. L II, 74/439.
34. Hegel does use this term when distinguishing between the mere determinateness (*Bestimmtheit*) and the proper determination or purpose (*Bestimmung*) of something. Whereas the concept of determinateness refers to external determinations, the concept of determination refers to the way in which something is determined from within. A table may be determined by a redness that does not belong to its proper being, but it will, regardless of its color, size, and so on, always be determined as a table. The concept of determination, Hegel notes, refers to 'the being-in-itself, to which the existing something ... continues to conform, notwithstanding its entanglement with an other [*gegen seine Verwicklung mit Anderem*] by which it was determined, thus maintaining itself in its being identical with itself' (L I, 132/123). This passage suggests that the state of being determined by something else (such as redness) precedes its effort to disentangle its proper determination from this determinateness.
35. 'This spiritual movement ... is the absolute method of knowing and at the same time the immanent soul of the content itself.' (L I, 17/28).
36. L I, 127/119, cf. L II, 76/440. The *Encyclopedia* offers a more concrete example of this. Self-consciousness – such as it has been conceived by Kant and Fichte – has negated the immediacy of consciousness, and has incorporated its contrary within itself. But since this negation is as yet a limited one, 'self-consciousness contains the negation not only within itself, but also outside of itself, as an external object, a non-I'. For that reason it is not yet 'absolute negativity' (Enc III, § 425, add.).
37. Hegel draws a similar distinction in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. He here argues that it is only the skeptical form of consciousness which begins to enact the dialectical movement by itself, albeit only with regard to its merely negative moment: 'Dialectic as a negative movement, as it immediately is, at first appears to consciousness as something to which it must surrender and which it has not brought about itself. As skepticism, on the other hand, it is a moment of self-consciousness, to which it does not happen that its truth and reality vanish without its knowing how.' (Phen 141/124). This crucial distinction already occurs in a draft of the speculative logic from 1804–1805. Hegel here notes with respect to 'being' and 'nothing': 'Until now the transition of the concept into its becoming-other, or into its reality, and the taking back of this becoming-other under the concept was *our reflection, a dialectical treatment* that developed the antitheses that were present undeveloped in what was posited. The ... content was not of the kind that would thus move on its own ...; rather, it was something dead whose movement was outside it: pure being is self-satisfied.' Conceptual determinations that actually presented themselves as relations, on the other hand, posited themselves as 'sublating themselves.' Yet these determinations could not yet truly actualize their being-for-itself; it is only in 'relations of thinking' such as 'definition'

that that which is 'maintains itself as itself in its contrary' and hence truly occurs as 'reflection into its very self' (Jen II, 117/117–18).

38. L I, 104/99, cf. 124/116.
39. L I, 84/83, cf. 184/165.
40. Cf. L I, 49/54, L II, 61/428, 67/433, 563/835.
41. However, Hegel praises Kant for considering the contradiction to belong to the nature of conceptual determinations as such. 'This result, *grasped in its positive aspect*, is nothing else but the inner *negativity* that constitutes the self-moving soul of these determinations, and the principle of all natural and spiritual life.' (L I, 52/56, cf. L II, 67/433, 558–59/832, Phn 62/51, Enc I, § 81. In § 79 of the *Encyclopedia* Hegel distinguishes between an abstract, dialectical, and speculative form of thought. The first form relies on fixed determinations, the second negates the purported independence of such determinations, and the third comprehends the unity of contrary determinations. Since, as Hegel notes, every concept is constituted by these three moments, they do not simply correspond to the three parts of the *Logic*. I have tried to show, however, that the extent to which concepts are capable of enacting these moments *by themselves* determines to which part of the *Logic* they belong.
42. Cf. Enc III, § 381, add., 20/10.
43. I consider Hegel's treatment of the concept of contradiction in more detail in Chapter 4.5.
44. Enc I, § 87, cf. L I, 160/146, Enc III, § 425, add. Hegel notes already in *Faith and Knowledge* that '[t]he nothing... is in its essence infinity, thought, absolute concept, absolute pure affirmation' (FK 351/112, cf. Jen II, 183–84/181).
45. L II, 245/577, cf. 274/601, Enc I § 159. Hegel notes in the *Doctrine of Being* that the concept of being is the concept in itself, that is, the concept which has not yet posited itself as concept (L I, 58/61).
46. The *Logic* often uses the verb *voraussetzen* to refer to the movement in which a concept opposes its contrary to itself so as to actualize itself by means of it. This meaning is lost in the verb 'to presuppose'. Whereas the understanding would argue that determining the essence of something presupposes the existence of actual things, Hegel argues that the concept of essence actualizes itself by pushing its contrary – being – forward as the conceptual element within which it can begin to manifest itself. On this account, essence 'presupposes itself and the sublation of this presupposition is essence itself' (L II, 27/402, cf. 119–21, 175–76/474–76, 520–21). In my view, this also applies to the concept as such. Hegel thus distinguishes between the external, arbitrary presuppositions he rejects and what could be called the 'immanent' presupposition carried out by the concept as such (cf. L II, 458/751, RH 28–29/27–28). The *Essay on Natural Law*, examined in Chapter 1, testifies to a similar logic. Hegel here suggests that the archaic determination of justice had to be pushed forward so as to prepare the ground for the rational determination of justice. I elaborate on this issue – with regard to Hegel's system – in Chapter 5.3 and – with regard to purposiveness – in Chapter 8.5 and 8.6.
47. L II, 570/841. Since the method, Hegel notes, 'is the objective immanent form, the immediacy of the beginning must be *in itself* deficient and endowed with the *urge* to carry itself further. ... Hence it may indeed be said



that every beginning must be made *with the absolute*, just as all advance is merely the exposition of it, insofar as its *in-itself* is the concept. But because the absolute is at first only *in itself* it equally is *not* the absolute nor the posited concept...; for what characterizes these is precisely the fact that in them the *in-itself* is only an abstract, one-sided moment.' (555/829, cf. 27/401, 259–60/588, L I, 70–71/70–72, 104/99). I come back to this in Chapter 5.3.

48. Whereas Hegel's reflections do not exclusively pertain to concepts, but include, for instance, modes of consciousness, I limit my summary account to the method such as it operates in the *Logic*.
49. L I, 49/54, cf. Phen 62/51.
50. L II, 562/835, cf. 561–64/834–36.
51. Hegel notes with respect to 'infinity' and the 'finite' that what is 'therefore present is the same negation of the negation in each' (L I, 160/146). I elaborate on this in Chapter 4.3.

## 4 Tragedy and Logic

1. 'But the finite itself in being raised into the infinite is in no sense acted on by an alien force [*eine fremde Gewalt*]; on the contrary, it is its nature... to have negated the limitation and to be beyond it.' (L I, 150/138)
2. Glockner (1968), likewise distinguishing between Hegel's pantragism and panlogism, argues that the latter view became predominant after the *Phenomenology* (159, 544). Yet what Glockner considers to get lost in the later texts is a sense of the finite, embodied individual who faces death (544). He thus seems to presuppose an opposition between the rational and the irrational that I consider to be irrelevant to Hegel's conception of the tragic. Although Glockner suggests that Hegel's 'metaphysical pantragism can be traced even in the *Logic*' (159) he never substantiates this view.
3. Cf. Kant, CPR, B 488–535.
4. Kant, CPR, B 434.
5. *Faith and Knowledge* was published in July 1802 and the *Essay on Natural Law* in November/December 1802 and May/June 1803.
6. FK 320/84. Hegel here seems to endorse Kant's view that philosophers such as Locke, Leibniz, and Wolff distinguished the sensible from the intelligible in a defective manner. It is precisely when these two spheres are indifferently projected onto the world as such that they produce, as Kant had shown, the antinomies of reason (cf. CPR, B 327). Cf.: 'These two opposites, whether they are called ego and nature, or pure and empirical self-consciousness, or cognition and being, or self-positing and self-opposing, or finitude and infinity, are together posited in the absolute. Ordinary reflection can see nothing in this antinomy but contradiction; reason alone sees the truth in this absolute contradiction through which both are posited and both nullified.' (D 115/174).
7. See Chapter 3.7. With respect to the conflict between contrary conceptual determinations exposed by the antinomies, Kant recognized, according to Hegel, 'that this conflict originates only through and within finitude.... Yet he did not succeed in dissolving the conflict. He did not succeed, in the first

place, because he did not sublate finitude itself. On the contrary, by turning the conflict into something subjective again, he allowed it to subsist. In the second place, he did not succeed because he can only use transcendental idealism as a negative key to the solution of the antinomy inasmuch as he denies that either side of it is anything in itself. Yet what is positive in these antinomies, their middle, is not recognized in this way' (FK 319/83–84). The term 'middle' here refers, for instance, to the concept 'infinity' that is in itself the synthetic unity of the contrary determinations 'infinity' and 'finitude'.

8. L I, 168/152, cf. L II, 73/438, Enc I, § 95, rem.
9. L I, 151–53/138–40, 160/145.
10. L I, 158/144, cf. 155/141–42.
11. 'That which is common to both determinations, their unity, posits them in the first place as negated, since each has to be what it is in its distinction from the other.' (L I, 158/144).
12. 'What is therefore present is the same negation of the negation in each. But the latter is *in itself* self-relation, affirmation, but as return to itself, that is, through the mediation which the negation of the negation is.' (L I, 160/146).
13. Phen 310–11/285, see Chapter 1.5.
14. The use of the conditional form 'hätte' (which is not rendered in the translation) also indicates this. Here and elsewhere, it is quite difficult to tell where Hegel gives voice to the way in which a concept has traditionally been understood and where he exposes its truly speculative meaning. In any case, as long as the identity of the infinite and the finite is merely in itself and only their opposition has been posited, both determinations are immediately converted into their counterparts. This is to say that when philosophy attempts to conceive of the finite in itself, it cannot but posit the infinite as the opposite of the finite. Conversely, it cannot conceive of the infinite without positing the finite as the opposite of the infinite. This dynamic underlies, according to Hegel, Kant's idea of infinite progress (cf. L I, 155–56/141–43, 161–62/146–47, 166–71/150–54). Hegel's criticism of this idea is directed against Kant and Fichte alike (cf. D 72/135, 76/139, 90/151).
15. L I, 159/145, my emphasis.
16. This is also confirmed by the following passage: '[T]he infinite goes forth *out* of itself into finitude because, being grasped as an abstract unity, it has no truth...; and conversely the finite goes *into* the infinite for the same reason. Or rather it should be said that the infinite... is nothing... without containing the other of itself.' (L I, 171/154). I argued in Chapter 3.9 that Hegel comprehends the relation between the spheres of being, essence, and the concept in a similar way. Whereas the sphere of the concept as such can be compared to the infinite as such, the sphere of essence can be compared to the infinite insofar as it has opposed itself to the finite.
17. Cf. L I, 178–81/160–63, 184–85/165–66, 189/169–70. Hegel maintains that Spinoza, contrary to Leibniz, was not even capable of determining the absolute principle of reality as being-for-itself (178–79/161).
18. 'Being-for-itself is thus a being that is for itself [*Fürsichseiendes*], and since in this immediacy its inner meaning vanishes, it is the wholly abstract limit of itself – the *one*.' (L I, 182/163). The 'one' is that mode of being-for-itself that is 'immersed in complete *externality*' (185/166).

19. Cf. L I, 176/159, Enc III, § 381, add., 20/10. I discuss this issue further in Chapter 6.6 and 6.7.
20. Contradiction is 'the negative in its essential determination, the principle of all self-movement, consisting solely in the manifestation of this self-movement' (L II, 76/440). I elaborate on Hegel's conception of contradiction in the *Science of Logic* in De Boer (2010b).
21. In the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel indeed traces back both metaphysics and the Enlightenment to the understanding (Enc I, § 74).
22. Phen 360–61/333. By denouncing faith as a lie, pure insight turns itself into a lie as well: 'As pure insight, therefore, it becomes the negative of pure insight, becomes untruth and unreason' (360/332).
23. Cf. PR, § 268, rem.

## 5 Time and Circularity

1. Hegel, referring to the content of the *Logic*, remarks: 'It can therefore be said that this content is the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite spirit.' (L I, 44/50, cf. Enc I, § 83, add.). This remark does not occur in the first edition of the *Logic*.
2. See Peperzak (2001: 43, 70–71, 97) for a recent interpretation that identifies Hegel's notion of the absolute idea with a (pantheistic) conception of God's presence in the universe. Whereas I share most of his criticisms of what he sees as reductive non-metaphysical readings, I hold that Hegel transformed the insights achieved within the theological tradition to a much larger extent than Peperzak contends. See Houlgate (1999) for a defense of Hegel against Schelling's criticism. Whereas Houlgate concentrates on the claim of the later Schelling that Hegel cannot do justice to existence or sheer being, I will only examine Schelling's comments on the role of the logic in Hegel's speculative system. These comments are in line with those discussed by Houlgate, however, in that Schelling in both cases opposes the view that reason constitutes the ultimate principle of reality.
3. 'This multiplicity, as self-external objectivity, has an indifferent subsistence, which in space and time, *if these could already be mentioned here*, is a completely different and self-subsistent externality.' (L II, 472/763, my emphasis). Malabou (2005:17) also notes that Hegel's system does not accommodate 'an analytic that exposes the concept of time in its plasticity', since time cannot be treated as a condition of possibility within the system itself.
4. D 45/112, cf. Phen 27/20, L I, 38/45.
5. Cf.: 'Insofar as the absolute is posited in the form of a subject, this science has an immanent boundary. Only by recognizing this boundary and sublating itself and its boundary ... does it raise itself to the science of the absolute and to the absolute point of indifference.' (D 113–14/172, cf. L I, 45/51).
6. D 111–12/170, cf. Schelling, STI 11/6.
7. D 111–12/170, cf.: 'The middle, the point of transition through which identity constructing itself as nature passes over to identity constructing itself as intelligence, is the interiorization of the light of nature, the lightning stroke

- of the ideal upon the real, as Schelling calls it, its self-constitution as point.' (D 111/170). See also Schelling, STI 5–6/2–3, WBN 101.
8. Schelling, IPN 679/23, cf. 705/41. I suppose – but cannot prove – that this Kantian strand is covered over by Schelling's later 'positive' philosophy. In my view, Hegel remained much more faithful to the basic insight of transcendental philosophy than the later Schelling.
  9. 'In the system of intelligence the objects are nothing in themselves; nature only exists in consciousness. We here abstract from the fact that the object is a nature and that intelligence, as consciousness, is conditioned by it. In the system of nature, on the other hand, we forget that nature is something known; the ideal determinations nature receives in science are also immanent in it.' (D 100/160). I will not consider the parts of Schelling's transcendental philosophy devoted to ethics and world history.
  10. Schelling, HMP 209–10/144. See Schulz (1955) and Tilliette (1969).
  11. 'In the one [science], the absolute is something subjective in the form of cognition, in the other it is something objective in the form of being.' (D 110/169).
  12. Schelling, HMP 223/155. Schelling here refers to Enc I, § 244. This paragraph is too concise to be understood without the following passages from the *Logic*: 'This is true to an even greater extent of absolute spirit, which, revealing itself as the concrete and final supreme truth of all being, is comprehended as that which at the *end* of the development freely externalizes itself, abandoning itself [*sich entlassend*] to the shape of an *immediate* being – resolving itself [*sich entschiessend*] to create a world which contains all that fell into the development preceding that result.' (L I, 70/71). 'The transition is therefore rather to be understood as the movement in which the idea, absolutely self-assured and self-contained, freely *releases itself* [*sich selbst frei entlässt*].' (L II, 573/843). I discuss these passages in Chapter 5.3.
  13. See Volkmann-Schluck (1964), Bourgeois (1982), Wandschneider and Höslé (1983), Labarrière (1986). Contrary to these authors, Hyppolite (1953) contends that, according to Hegel, divine thought does not exist before nature and finite spirit, but actualizes itself in the *Logic* alone (78–79/64).
  14. Cf. L I, 26–27/36, 60/62–63, Enc II, § 246 add.
  15. 'I maintain that it is by means of this self-construing process alone that philosophy can be an objective, demonstrated science.' (L I, 17/28).
  16. In Chapter 3 I have advanced a similar thesis with regard to the structure of the *Science of Logic*. Given my focus on Hegel's system I will not elaborate on the nature of the three cycles constitutive of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. See on this Forster (1998).
  17. Schelling, STI 66/49. Cf.: 'Thus, philosophy can enumerate only those acts that have determined the stages of the history of self-consciousness, and can expose them with regard to their connection.' (67/50). The methodical return to the first stage of a development also applies to the philosophy of nature: 'It is only possible to witness the first genesis of the objective by depotentializing [*depotenzieren*] the object of all philosophy, an object of which the ego constitutes the highest potency, and beginning the construction with the object that has thus been reduced to the first potency.' (WBN 719).

18. L I, 67–68/68–70. Cf.: '[T]his self-generation [of its content], the pure concept, is the objective element in which spirit actually exists, and spirit is in this way, in its existence for itself, an object reflected into itself. Thus comprehending itself as spirit, spirit is *science*. This science constitutes the actuality of spirit and the realm that it establishes within its proper element.' (Phen 19/14). Within this element – its 'aether' (19/14) – thought is exclusively determined by the self-determining movement of the concept. This movement also constitutes the animating principle of the *objects* of speculative science (45/37, cf. L I, 17/28).
19. The three parts of the *Jena System Draft* from 1804/1805 are concerned with logic, metaphysics, and philosophy of nature. The first two parts can be considered to constitute a preliminary draft of the *Science of Logic*. Pinkard (2000: 202) mentions an elaborated draft of a logic from 1805/1806 which allegedly has been lost.
20. Phen 529/491. Hegel notes at the end of the *Jena System Draft* from 1805/06: 'Philosophy externalizes itself [*entäussert sich ihrer selbst*] – arrives at its beginning, immediate consciousness – which is precisely divided within itself – thus, philosophy is the human being as such – and such as the [first] moment of the human being is, is the world – and such as the world is, is the human being – One stroke creates them both.' (Jen III, 261/182).
21. When Hegel uses expressions such as 'sich entlassen' or 'sich frei entlassen' he seems to have the biblical concept of *kenosis* in mind. St. Paul uses this expression to state that Jesus deliberately relinquished his divine nature in order to become truly human (*Philippians* 2:5–8). In the mystical tradition going back to Böhme this image was also used with regard to God's creation of the world. Hegel was acquainted with this tradition through the works of, among others, the Romantic theologian Franz von Baader (1765–1841). Hegel may have adopted the term 'entlassen' from this tradition, while 'emptying' it, so to speak, of its theological content. See Magee (2001) for an original account of the influence of the hermetic tradition, which went through a renaissance in the eighteenth century, on Hegel's thought.
22. L I, 68–69/70, cf. Enc I, § 78 rem.
23. Cf.: 'Only pure knowing, that is, spirit which has freed itself from its appearance as consciousness, begins with free, pure being.' (WL I, 34). This passage is omitted in the 1831 edition of the *Science of Logic*.
24. 'Objective logic, therefore, which treats of being and essence, in fact constitutes the *genetic exposition of the concept*.' (L II, 246/577). Cf. Chapter 3.8.
25. Phen 525/488, cf. PR, § 2.
26. Strictly speaking, this obtains of the speculative system alone. Since the *Phenomenology* merely pertains to the subjective side of the subject-object (cf. Phen 528–29/491), it is still based on the distinction between the subjective and objective moment of thought, a distinction that is overcome in the logic and the philosophies of nature and spirit.
27. See Chapter 3.2.
28. Cf. L I, 70/71, where Hegel maintains that the ultimate result of pure thought, that is, speculative science itself, constitutes the *principle* of the development of pure thought such as it occurs in the *Logic*.
29. Enc I, § 213, my emphasis, cf. L II, 549/824. Hegel notes with regard to the philosophies of nature and spirit that '[t]hese concrete sciences present

themselves in a more real form of the idea than logic does, but not by turning back to the reality abandoned by consciousness' (L II, 265/592). The term 'real' here refers to the concrete *content* of these ideas and not to the existing entities that consciousness finds over against itself.

30. See on this Chapter 2.8.
31. Cf.: 'This conception of philosophy is the idea *that thinks itself*, ... [it is] the logical in the sense of the universal which affirms itself in the concrete content that constitutes its actuality.' (Enc III, § 574, cf. L I, 67/69, L II, 466/758, 469/760). Hegel generally distinguishes, albeit not unambiguously, between the idea as such and the mode of the idea that consists in its absolute self-comprehension. This latter mode of the idea is called 'absolute idea' or 'pure idea'. Hegel, identifying the absolute idea with 'the idea of absolute cognition', maintains in the *Logic* that this idea 'is the pure concept that has itself as its content and, as such, develops into ... the system of science by going through the totality of its determinations' (L II, 572/842–43). The *Encyclopedia*, concerned with the unfolding of the idea as such, barely reflects on the method that allows Hegel to reconstruct this unfolding. Nature is here defined as the idea 'in the form of externalization' (Enc I, § 18, rem., cf. § 247). Hegel here deliberately abstracts from the subjective moment of the essential determinations of the idea of nature. This is in accordance with the Schellingian method Hegel embraces from the *Differenzschrift* onward: 'In the system of nature, on the other hand, we forget that nature is something known.' (D 100/160). Only at its very end does the *Encyclopedia Logic* touch upon the free resolve of the idea (§ 244). The final pages of the *Logic* and the *Phenomenology* dwell somewhat longer on the idea which has actually established itself as absolute knowing or absolute idea. Only this latter mode of the idea has the freedom to return to the first stages of its actual development. Nuzzo (2005) also stresses that Hegel conceives of the absolute idea no longer as a metaphysical substance, but as thought thinking itself, a thinking that is pre-eminently achieved by Hegel's reflection on the method of speculative science. On her reading, Hegel in the final chapter of the *Logic* conceives of the absolute idea as opposing itself to the 'whole preceding logical movement that, without the absolute idea as method, is inexorably reduced to mere error, opinion, and transitory untruth' (192). It seems to me, however, that when Hegel opposes the absolute idea to the sphere of 'error, confusion, opinion, endeavour, caprice, and transitoriness' (L II, 549/824), he rather has in mind the sphere of contingency, a sphere that has been excluded from the realm of philosophical investigation from the outset. The absolute idea consists precisely in the comprehension of the totality of conceptual determinations treated in the *Logic* itself. Seen from this perspective, empirical facts and events only have meaning insofar as they are conceived in light of the absolute method. I briefly discuss the issue of contingency in Section 4 of this chapter.
32. Kant defined nature as the sum total of all appearances (CPR, B 163).
33. Hegel's conception of the relation between philosophy and science is discussed in Chapter 6.2.
34. L I, 70/71. By translating 'ein unmittelbares Sein' as 'an immediate being' Miller wrongly suggests that Hegel here refers to a particular entity instead of an ontological sphere.

35. The philosophies of nature and spirit must 'recognize the logical forms in the shapes they assume in nature and spirit, shapes which are only specific expressions of the forms of pure thought.' (Enc I, § 24 add. 2, 84/39). The distinction between an 'inner' and 'outer' circle belongs to Hegel's methodical principle as such. In order to comprehend the movement in which something unfolds its immanent determinations, Hegel tends to focus, first, on the way it distinguishes itself within itself (its reflection-into-itself), and, second, on its attempt at appropriating that which is set against itself. Thus, whereas the distinction between 'essence' and 'semblance' emerges from the 'reflection-into-itself' of the concept of essence, the distinction between 'essence' and 'appearance' emerges from its relation to that which is set against it (L II, 16/391).
36. L II, 573/843. It seems to me that the syntax of the German text is incorrect. I propose to change 'setzt sich ... die Vermittlung, aus welcher' into 'setzt sich ... die Vermittlung aus, aus welcher'.
37. The *Logic*, I argued in Chapter 3, reconstructs the essential moments of pure thought by distinguishing the spheres of being, essence, and the concept. In the same way, the *Phenomenology* distinguishes – though not yet in these terms – between the spheres of subjective, objective, and absolute spirit. In each case, Hegel deliberately abstracts from the whole in order to reconstruct its necessary moments in a systematic way. In my view, it is not very productive to conceive of the philosophies of nature and spirit as 'applying' the results of the *Logic*. The partial analogies and parallel structure of these texts rather result from the fact that Hegel each time lets the same methodical principle unfold in a different realm. This is also the case with the *Philosophy of Right* and the lectures on world history, art, religion, and philosophy. Each of these works comprehends a particular realm by distinguishing, often from various perspectives, its poorest from its richest mode and by subsequently bridging their gap. These texts can therefore be considered to accomplish further (relative) cycles. Thus, Hegel notes with regard to his treatment of world history: 'Just as [spirit] has passed through all its moments in history, so also must it pass through them again in the present – in its comprehension of itself.' (RH 183/151).
38. Cf.: 'This is the impotence of nature, that it cannot adhere to and exhibit the strictness of the concept and goes astray in this blind irrational multiplicity. ... Since nature is the self-externalization of the concept, it is allowed [*es ist der Natur freigegeben*] to indulge itself in this variety. Similarly, spirit, even though possessing the concept in the shape of the concept, becomes involved with representation and wanders about in its endless variety.' (L II, 282/607–08, cf. Phen 529/492). 'This impotence on the part of nature sets limits to philosophy, and it is completely inappropriate to demand of the concept that it should comprehend, and as it is said, construe or deduce these contingent products of nature.' (Enc II, § 250 rem., cf. § 248, rem., § 250). See for a well-balanced, general account of Hegel's views on contingency Mabilhé (1999); see also Henrich (1967).
39. Cf.: 'For us, spirit presupposes nature; yet spirit is the *truth* of nature and hence that which precedes nature in an *absolute* sense. In this truth, [the purported independence of] nature has been annulled, and spirit has constituted itself as the idea that has become for itself.' (Enc III, § 381). Within

one sentence, Hegel here distinguishes between the perspective of finite thought, including that of Schelling, and the perspective of speculative science. Whereas the first perspective posits nature as the ultimate presupposition of spirit, the latter conceives of the essential determinations of nature itself as relying on the movement in which the pure concept determines itself: 'Whereas external nature constitutes the contiguous [*nächste*] presupposition of actual spirit, the logical idea constitutes its ultimate [*erste*] presupposition.' (§ 381, add.)

40. Accordingly, the *Encyclopedia* distinguishes between three modes of revelation: (1) The becoming of nature as the 'turning of the idea into the immediacy proper to external and singular modes of being' (Enc III, § 384 and add., 30/18); (2) the act in which spirit posits the world as that which belongs to it, yet in such a way that this world at once retains its independence (§ 384 add., 31/19); and (3) the mode of revelation occurring in the element of the concept, that is, in philosophy. This latter revelation consists in 'the creation of the world as the proper being of spirit, a creation in which spirit gives itself the *affirmation* and *truth* of its freedom' (§ 384, cf. § 381 add., 25/14–15).
41. Phen 524–25/487. Hegel also refers to time as 'the existing concept itself' (34/27).
42. 'This original synthetic unity ... is the principle both of productive imagination ... and of the understanding. The understanding is only the higher potency; in it the identity, which in intuition is completely immersed in the manifold, ... constitutes itself as universality.' (FK 305/70, cf. 308/73).
43. Enc II, § 258 rem., cf. L I, 271/234.
44. I further elaborate on Hegel's conception of space and time in Chapter 6.4.
45. LPH 96–97/72, cf.: 'It is in accordance with the concept of spirit that the development of history should occur in time.' (RH 153/127).
46. Cf. L I, 124/115–16, 149/137. Cf. also: 'Time is as continuous as space is, for it is abstract negativity relating itself to itself, and in this abstraction there is as yet no difference of a real nature.' (Enc II, § 258, rem.).
47. Enc II, § 258 rem., cf. L II, 76/440.
48. Cf. Enc I, § 145 add., 286/206. Hegel's conception of world history will be further discussed in Chapters 8 and 9.
49. As was argued in Chapter 3.7, Hegel implicitly distinguishes between *three* modes of negativity. The 'contradictory' mode of negativity which defines the *Doctrine of Essence* allows Hegel indeed to comprehend finite processes of self-actualization. In this sense, it can be considered to underlie any mode of the concept determined by the opposition between contrary determinations. Thus, Hegel also considers nature to be 'the unresolved contradiction' (Enc II, § 248, rem.). Since, however, contradictory negativity is a particular mode of absolute negativity and hence cannot, in the long run, resist the latter, it lacks the disturbing force of tragic negativity.

## 6 Nature

1. None of these early texts on nature have as yet been translated into English. Of the text from 1804/05, only the parts devoted to logic and metaphysics



have come out in translation; of the texts from 1803/04 and 1805/06, only the parts devoted to the philosophy of spirit.

2. Commentaries tend to identify Hegel's philosophy of nature with its elaboration in the *Encyclopedia*. This is also the case in the volume edited by Houlgate (1998), where only one of the early drafts is mentioned once (81). Devoting two pages to these texts, Pinkard (2000: 186–87) notes twice that he considers its details not important enough to recount in his book. Horstmann's account in Horstmann (1977) is equally limited to two pages. The only exception I am aware of is the volume edited by Vieweg (1998). I agree with Vieweg that Hegel's Jena period constitutes the decisive phase in the development of his philosophy and that, accordingly, his early philosophy of nature cannot be ignored (6).
3. See Kimmerle (1970) for an account of the differences among Hegel's early system drafts. Kimmerle argues that from 1804 onward Hegel's system no longer accounts for the dependence of human consciousness on nature. It is, according to Kimmerle, only by abandoning this view that the system of speculative science can close itself (293). Unfortunately, this view remains rather undeveloped. Moreover, Kimmerle does not seem to account for the contingent causes of these differences. The fact that Hegel from one year to the next focused on a certain part of the system or referred more extensively to the results of the natural sciences, does not, in my view, warrant the conclusion that Hegel's basic methodical position has undergone a transformation (154). This also holds for Kimmerle's view that, after 1804, Hegel subordinated the realm of nature to that of spirit (162).
4. Cf. Enc II, § 258, rem., cf. L II, 271/597. Already by 1805/06, Hegel maintains that philosophy should abstract from the difference between the subjective and objective determinations of space: 'Intuition is posited because space, as this undivided continuity, is immediately at one with the ego; but this remark need not concern us here.' (Jen III, 4).
5. 'Since we are considering consciousness as such, ... the consideration of consciousness insofar as [its moments] appear as opposed, that is, as subjective and objective, has no meaning for us. ... [I]n empirical intuition, the one is something which intuitively empirically, the other is empirically intuited; ... and this also holds for that which comprehends and that which is comprehended.' (Jen I, 203/223–24). Cf.: '[T]he undivided idea that is related to itself [nature] only appears as other for the knowing nature [knowledge]. The in-itself of both is the idea ... that is absolutely identical to itself.' (Jen II, 200). The *Encyclopedia* defines the idea as 'that which is true *in and for itself*, the absolute unity of the concept and objectivity' (Enc I, § 213). Referring to Fichte and Schelling, the *Science of Logic* notes that this unity 'has rightly been determined as subject-object' (L II, 466/758, cf. D 99–101/159–61). It is not surprising, therefore, that the young Schelling, followed by Hegel, showed great interest in Plato's *Timaeus*, in which the creation of the universe is conceived as the descent of the world soul into the visible world. German idealism as such, it might be argued, consists in the attempt to reconcile Kant's transcendental philosophy with Greek ontology. When he was 18 years old, Schelling wrote a commentary on the *Timaeus*. See Krings (1994) on Schelling's comprehension of the relation between Plato and Kant in this text.

6. The natural sciences have largely isolated themselves from philosophy, Hegel maintains in the *Essay on Natural Law*, by choosing empirical experience rather than the absolute as their basic principle (cf. NL 434–35/55–56, Enc II, § 246, add.). Whereas Hegel's philosophy of nature attempts to expose the shortcomings of the prevailing presuppositions of the empirical sciences, especially insofar as they are concerned with organic nature, it is by no means independent of the results achieved by these sciences. By discovering 'general determinations, species, and laws', he notes in the *Encyclopedia*, the empirical sciences 'prepare the content of the particular for its entrance into philosophy.... By taking up these contents in such a way that their immediacy and factuality is annulled, thought at the same time develops out of itself. Thus, while owing its development to the empirical sciences, philosophy bestows upon the contents of these sciences the most essential form of freedom proper to thought, that is, the form of the a priori' (Enc I, § 12, rem., 58/18). See Westphal (2009) for an account that stresses Hegel's dependence on the empirical sciences. Stone (2005), by contrast, maintains that Hegel basically construes his theory of nature 'through a priori reasoning', tracing 'how each natural stage arises as the rationally necessary solution to the contradiction in the stage before it' (31, cf. 76). According to Stone, Hegel attempts to incorporate the relevant results of scientific research into this primarily a priori account (77–80). As I see it, however, speculative science draws on these results from the outset, first, by distinguishing between their a priori principles and a posteriori contents and, second, by comprehending them as particular modes of the concept as such. That is why, as Stone aptly shows, Hegel's accounts of nature and consciousness cannot but run parallel (29–55). She further maintains that Hegel's a priori account of nature must correspond to 'the real course of natural development' (76, cf. 32). This suggests that she does not distinguish between actual nature (that is, nature such as it constitutes the object of the natural sciences) and the essential determinations of the *idea* of nature. In my view, Hegel's remarks on the necessary development of these determinations refer to his philosophical *reconstruction* of these determinations alone. See Hahn (2007) for an account of Hegel's conception of life in light of Goethe's organic view on nature. Considering even logical concepts to be instantiated by empirical phenomena (18), she notes that 'Hegel's renunciation of the very distinction between concept and object will cost him the sharp distinction between what is logical and what is empirical' (19). It seems to me, however, that this price must only be paid if one adheres to a 'naturalistically construed dialectic', as Hahn herself does (19).
7. Enc II, § 376, add., cf. § 357, add. 2, Jen I, 167, 179, L II, 486/774. The additions, largely stemming from notes, drafts, and students' lecture notes issuing from Hegel's teaching at Jena and Heidelberg, have been inserted by Michelet in the 1842 edition of the second part of the *Encyclopedia*. In order to compensate for the formal character of the main text, Michelet picked out the material he thought most appropriate (see E. Moldenhauer and K.M. Michel in Enc III, 426–28). In most cases the origin of the additions has been impossible to trace. The only mature text that expounds on the animal is the second part of the *Encyclopedia*. See for shorter remarks on the animal RH 56–57/49–50 and Enc III, § 381, add.

8. 'It is in this way that the idea exists in the independent subject; this subject, constituting an organ of the concept, finds everything to be ideal and fluid, that is, it *thinks*; it possesses itself of everything that is spatial and temporal and, in that which it thus possesses, it possesses universality, that is, itself.' (Enc II, § 376, add.).
9. Enc II, § 376, add., cf. § 251 and Schelling, STI 10/6.
10. Jen II, 197, cf. Jen I, 183.
11. Thus, Hegel remarks with regard to nature insofar as it is determined by mechanical relations: 'We construct it, and in its construction it will turn into its contrary, that is, it will move beyond its indifferent unity ... to turn into the self-differentiating unity ... of chemism.' (Jen I, 9).
12. Actually, this only holds for Jen II and III. The latter text deals most extensively with the concept of aether.
13. See Neuser (1995: 135–50). From Newton onward, Neuser points out, many scientists tried to resolve problems concerning, among others, the laws of gravitation and electricity by presupposing an insensible matter called 'aether'; this ultimate element was considered to affect physical matter (cf. L II, 174/519–20).
14. In many respects, the concept of aether is congruous with the concept of *chora* in Plato's *Timaeus* (cf. 48e–51a, 52a–c). In his commentary on this text, Schelling refers to this concept with terms such as 'primordial matter' and 'primordial substrate' (Tim 24, 58). See Büttner (1998) for an account of Hegel's conception of the relation between *chora* and aether.
15. Jen III, 3, cf. Jen II, 200–05. Hegel here seems to conceive of aether as the 'non-sensuous sensuous' preceding the pure forms of intuition. Hegel uses the same term with regard to space in the *Logic* (L II, 535/813) and with regard to space and time in the *Encyclopedia* (Enc II, § 258).
16. Jen II, 200–06, cf. Jen III, 3–4.
17. The concept as such consists in the unity of these two moments: 'Hence, the absolute itself is the identity of identity and non-identity; being opposed and being one are both together in it.' (D 96/156). Since, in my view, the term 'concept' better expresses the movement in which something distinguishes and identifies its contrary moments, I will avoid references to 'the absolute'.
18. 'Aether, this absolute unity of the self-identical and the infinite, is the unity of both insofar as they are moments, moments which, insofar as they are separated from one another, are ideal, sublating themselves and turning in upon themselves; qua moments ... they are in themselves their opposite.' (Jen II, 206).
19. Jen II, 209, cf. 276–77. Hegel here refers to the movement in which a future 'not-now' turns into a 'now' and hence into a past 'not-now'.
20. 'For absolute space is this self-identity; in it, the negative, the limit and its movement, a movement occurring as time, is completely annulled [*aufgehoben*], and space is this posited annulment. ... Therefore, space occurs as spurious infinity, for the negative as such does not belong to it [*weil das Negative nicht as solches an ihm is*]. In space, the negative [occurs as] something that is beyond itself and should not exist.' (Jen II, 210–11).
21. Jen II, 206, 210, 216.
22. Jen III, 14. Thus, the essence of movement consists in 'the immediate unity of time and space'; movement 'is time insofar as the latter has acquired

- actuality through space, or it is space insofar as the latter has acquired its distinctions through time' (16).
23. If infinity, determined as space, unfolds the totality of its determinations, its negativity occurs as 'exclusion, as point, or as limit in general' (Jen II, 206–07, cf. 210–11). The spatial point, incapable of maintaining itself as the negation of the indifference characteristic of space, immediately goes on to negate this negation; by means of this latter negation it annuls its spatial character as such, thus turning into the absolute 'this' of time, that is, into the 'now'. Hegel also refers to this 'now' as the 'absolutely different relation of the undivided [*absolut differente Beziehung des Einfachen*]' (207). I take this to mean that the 'now' can only maintain itself, as limit, by constantly passing into that which it is not. See on this Koyré (1971: 167–68, 174).
  24. Cf. Enc II, § 259, rem. Interestingly, the *Encyclopedia* considers the transition from space to time as a one-way movement: 'The negativity which, as point, pertains to space and develops its determinations within it as line and plane, ... at once posits itself in the sphere of externality in such a way that it appears to be indifferent to the ... next-to-one-another. Thus posited for itself, it is *time*.' (Enc II, § 257). Only in Jen II does Hegel conceive of space and time as mutually turning into their counterpart. By Jen III, he abandons this symmetry by letting time evolve out of space and, hence, by conceiving of movement as the sublation of space and time (Jen III, 9–13). This linear development clearly corresponds to that of being, nothing, and becoming in the *Science of Logic*.
  25. Jen II, 244. In the *Timaeus* Plato considers time to be a dynamic representation of eternity, a representation proper to everything that is submitted to change (37d).
  26. '[T]hat which is material consists precisely in positing its center as external to itself.' (Enc II, § 262, rem.). Matter as such consists in the unity of attraction and repulsion (§ 262). The relation between these contrary forces is such that repulsion essentially thwarts the effort of attraction to reach its ultimate center. This is to say that matter as such is incapable of 'concentrating' itself (cf. § 262, add., Enc III, § 381, add., 19/9, RH 55/48. According to the *Jena System Drafts*, the mode of matter that is proper to individual things constitutes a subordinate moment of absolute matter, that is, of aether. Hardly elaborating on this subordinate moment itself, Hegel reproaches Descartes for not distinguishing between matter such as we actually experience it and absolute matter (Jen II, 217).
  27. 'It is the idea of the organic that the general and the totality are the same.... This generality, however, is not free for itself, it is immersed in individuality, [such that] only this individuality [is] present.' (Jen I, 179, cf. Enc II, § 249, L II, 468/759–60).
  28. Cf. Jen I, 121–22, Jen II, 277, L II, 429/727.
  29. L II, 468/759–60, cf. Enc II, § 248, rem.
  30. Although the 1805/06 draft offers the most comprehensive contribution to something like a speculative biology, it hardly addresses the interiorization of time that Hegel considers to occur in the animal. I will focus, therefore, on the text written in 1803/04.
  31. Cf. on this Aristotle, *The Anima*, 415 b9–29 and Hegel on Aristotle in LHP II, 174–77; cf. also Enc III, § 381, add., 19–20/10.

32. In additions to the main text of the *Encyclopedia* (which are likely to stem from his Jena period) Hegel goes so far as to suggest that a perception such as hunger and that which might serve to satisfy this hunger constitute nothing but two sides of the same coin: 'The negation of myself that occurs when hunger is within me, is at once present as something other than myself, as something to be digested; my activity consists in annulling this opposition, namely, by positing this other as identical to myself.' (Enc II, § 245, add., cf. Jen I, 203, Enc III, § 381, add., 20/10, § 412).
33. Cf. Aesth I, 165–66/122–23.
34. Evidently, Hegel's construction of the way in which the animal relates to its environment presupposes a strict limit between animals and human beings; he does not refer to the fact that many animals recognize recurring patterns, communicate with their like and take part in well-organized communities. Since these and similar activities would be impossible without a certain capacity of memory and representation, the line between animals and human beings is far less easy to draw than Hegel contends.
35. '[I]n the animal, this movement begins to relate to itself as ideal.' (Jen I, 166). Cf.: 'The self of the organism . . . contains being as something sublated [*als ein Aufgehobenes*]. Because of this, the organism is raised into pure ideality, that is, into a completely transparent universality; it is space and time, and at the same time neither spatial nor temporal: it perceives something that is spatial and temporal, something, that is, which is distinguished from itself.' (Enc II, § 357, add. 2).
36. Cf. L II, 468/759–60.
37. '[T]he animal . . . exhibits merely the non-spiritual dialectic of transition from one single sensation filling its whole soul to another single sensation which equally exclusively prevails in it; it is man who first raises himself above the singularity of sensation to the universality of thought.' (Enc III, § 381, add., 25/14).
38. Jen I, 199, cf. Enc III, § 448.
39. Hegel himself does not use the Schellingian term 'contraction' in this context. He does use this term, however, while commenting upon the concept of aether (cf. Jen II, 204).
40. Jen III, 262/182. This passage stems from the last section devoted to the philosophy of spirit. See Chapter 5.5 for a brief discussion of similar remarks in later texts.
41. Jen III, 176/90–91, cf. Jen I, 201/221–22.

## 7 Language

1. Cf. Jen I, 201/221–22, Jen III, 175–76/89–91.
2. L I, 20/31, cf. Enc I, §24, add. 2, Enc III, § 462.
3. Houlgate (2006a: 75–84) defends Hegel's conception of language against Gadamer's criticism of Hegel by emphasizing this distinction. Gadamer (1971) takes Hegel unduly to assume that language 'is merely an instinctive logic that has not yet penetrated itself conceptually' (64/92, cf. 69/99). For Gadamer, by contrast, no logic is capable of completely retrieving the linguistic element from which it emerges.

4. The *Encyclopedia* conceives of words as signs that occur temporally (Enc III, § 459). It might be argued that Hegel implicitly conceives of both time and language as modes of externality that allow reason to actualize itself in the realm of human culture. It is perhaps no coincidence that none of his works offer an encompassing analysis of these two phenomena. McCumber (1993) maintains that Hegel 'is simply trying to coordinate two different sets of words: those actually in use around him, belonging to a historically developed ... language called High German; and the reformed company [of words] produced by his System itself' (24). Thus distinguishing between historical 'representational names' and 'names as such', McCumber argues that only the latter are fully capable of expressing philosophical thought. Although I agree with McCumber's 'non-metaphysical' approach to Hegel's conception of language, I doubt whether the relation between philosophical thought and language can be sufficiently clarified by reducing Hegel's system to a 'rational reform of language' (20). According to McCumber, Hegel's system develops by taking up an existing representational name that is merely homonymous with the name that articulates a pure moment of the system (309). As I see it, however, Hegel's treatment of philosophical concepts differs from a traditional philosophical approach in that he no longer conceives of them as independent entities, but comprehends them in light of the self-determining movement of the concept as such.
5. Phen 428/395, cf. 335/308–09, 464/430.
6. Cf. on the 'original word' L II, 550/825, and on the 'dead bones of logic' L I, 48/53. In order to answer the question as to how Hegel's language differs from the natural language from which it emerges (31/26–27, 65/53), Hyppolite (1953) mainly elaborates on Hegel's analysis of language in the *Encyclopedia* and on the remarks concerning the speculative proposition in the *Phenomenology*. He concludes that the ultimate 'element' of language and thought, in which being and meaning reflect one another, is *logos* (246/188). I do not quite see, however, how this provides an answer to the central questions of the book. Simon (1966) also starts out from the question concerning the essence of language. He rightly maintains, I hold, that this question bears on the system as such and hence cannot be elaborated in a specific part of the *Encyclopedia* (15, 171).
7. Jen III, 175/89–90 Cf.: 'This material, in being seized by the 'I', is at the same time poisoned and transformed by the latter's universality; it loses its isolated, independent existence and receives a spiritual one.' (Enc III, § 381 add., 21/11).
8. Enc I, § 145 add. See Cook (1973: 158). According to the *Encyclopedia* it is precisely the arbitrary relation between sound and meaning, that is, the sign-character of language, that allows thought to direct itself to the meaning of words without being disturbed by their sensible side (Enc III, § 457 add.). Simon (1966: 171–72, 177–79) regards Hegel's conception of the sign-character of language as the presupposition of the whole Hegelian system: only if words, as signs, guarantee an immediate and unambiguous access to their meaning can Hegel at once presuppose that language is the fundamental precondition of his system and maintain that his scientific system does not presuppose anything.

9. Cf. L I, 90/88 and Chapter 3.2. Elsewhere in the *Logic* Hegel credits Plato and Aristotle with freeing the forms of thought from their initial submersion in 'self-conscious intuition, figurate conception, and in our desiring and willing' (22/33). In neither of these cases, however, does he refer to the submersion of these forms in language.
10. I would like to note, however, that concepts such as 'matter' belong to the content of speculative science only insofar as they are themselves conceptual, that is, insofar as they constitute moments of the *idea* of nature.
11. The concept that constitutes the foundation of all specific concepts 'is not sensuously intuited or represented; it is solely an object, a product and content of *thinking*, and it is the absolute, self-subsistent matter [*Sache*], the logos, the reason [*Vernunft*] of that which is, the truth of what determines the name of things; it is least of all the logos which should be left outside the science of logic' (L I, 30/39).
12. Hegel would maintain that words like 'Sein', 'être', and 'being' indicate the same ontological concept by means of different sounds. The same categorical distinctions can – more or less clearly – be found in different languages, and philosophy 'has the right to select from the language of common life which is made for the world of representations such expressions *as seem to approximate* the determinations of the concept' (L II, 406/708).
13. See Gadamer (1971: 63/91).
14. Phen 47–48/39–40, cf. 34–35/26–28. Marx (1967: 248) rightly notes that while the actual sentences of the *Logic* consist in much more than pure categories, the *Logic* moves beyond the individual sentences to establish their logical cohesion.

## 8 Teleology

1. L II, 437/734. Teleology, Hegel maintains, has often been conceived in terms of external purposiveness, a conception that is not in accordance with its innermost principle (L II, 440/736). In the principle of teleology, the concept as such begins to emerge as 'a principle of freedom which in the utter certainty of its self-determination is absolutely liberated from being externally determined by mechanism' (440/737). I will not elaborate on Hegel's largely implicit appropriation and sublation of the conceptions of teleology put forward by Aristotle, Kant, and others.
2. L II, 440/737, 458/750–51. Cf. Kant, CPJ 44/112. Contrary to Kant, Hegel maintains that purposiveness – as a form of the concept as such – is constitutive not only of our knowledge of nature, but also of nature itself insofar as it can become the object of knowledge: 'But the end-relation is not for that reason a reflective judging that considers external objects only according to a unity...; on the contrary, it is the absolute truth that judges objectively and determines external objectivity absolutely.' (L II, 444/739).
3. L II, 453/747, cf. 457/750.
4. When a house is being built, Hegel remarks in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, the materials 'are used in accordance with their nature, and they act together to create a product which then restricts them. The human passions are satisfied in much the same way: they fulfill themselves

and their ends in accordance with their specific nature, and thereby create the edifice of human society. ... And the same applies to the world order in general; its ingredients are the passions on the one hand and reason on the other. The passions are the active force, and they are by no means always opposed to ethical life, for it is through them that the universal is realized' (RH 84/71–72).

5. As was argued in Chapter 2, this – implicit – difference between the realm of the empirical sciences and the realm of metaphysics is pivotal to the *Logic* as a whole.
6. L II, 448–49/743, my emphasis.
7. Cf. L II, 542/819, 464/756; Enc I, §§ 212–13.
8. L II, 543/819. '[T]hus the good, although valid in and for itself, is some particular end, but an end that need not wait to receive its truth through its realization, but is already on its own account the true.' (543/819).
9. 'The realized good is good by virtue of what it already is in the subjective end, in its idea; its realization gives it an external existence.' (L II, 544/820).
10. Kant and Fichte are briefly mentioned in the corresponding section of the *Encyclopedia* (Enc I, § 234, add., cf. LHP III, 369/461, 372/464). As I argued in Chapter 4.3, Hegel in a similar way identifies with the view of the understanding – including Kant – on the relation between the infinite and the finite before moving on to his own position.
11. This interpretation is not corroborated, however, by an addition to Hegel's treatment of teleology in the *Encyclopedia*. This addition refers to the infinite end of the world as the absolute good itself and suggests that this good has already accomplished itself (Enc I, § 212, add.). In my view, this passage lacks the important nuances of the *Logic* in that it does not distinguish between the principle of self-determination as such and its appearance as idea of the good, that is, as moral end. The *Differenzschrift* distinguishes in this regard between, on the one hand, the absolute as the end that is already present [*schon vorhanden*] and the way in which reason actually 'produces' this end, namely, by liberating thought from its limited conceptions of the absolute (D 24/93, cf. Phen 58/47).
12. L II, 468/760. Cf.: 'The aim [of spirit], however, is ... the creation of a spiritual world which is in accordance with its own concept. ... [I]n this way the universal end of spirit and history is comprehended; and just as the seed bears within it the whole nature of the tree, the taste, the form of its fruits, so already the first traces of spirit contain virtually the whole of history.' (RH 61/53).
13. If the logic of entanglement is, for instance, applied to the concept of friendship, then true friendship emerges as a relation that is based on the finite effort to exclude the moment of self-interest from itself, a moment by which it was from the outset pervaded. Since the friendship owes its 'life' to the moment it seeks to exclude from itself, this exclusion can never completely succeed and threatens the purity of the friendship from within rather than without. This view by no means implies that true friendship is impossible. It merely highlights the precarious nature of relations such as friendship.
14. RH 55/48. Freedom 'has to be earned and won through the infinite mediation of discipline acting upon cognition and will' (117/99). The *Logic*



determines the natural moments of spirit not as consciousness and will, but, more generally, as life. In spirit, Hegel notes here, 'life appears partly as opposed to it, partly as posited as at one with it. . . . Life as such, then, is for spirit partly a *means*, and as such spirit opposes it to itself; partly spirit is a living individual and life is its body, and again, this unity of spirit with its living corporeality is born from spirit itself as an *ideal*' (L II, 471–72/762).

## 9 History

1. See Chapter 4.7.
2. LPH 32/19, 86/63. Hegel delivered these lectures in Berlin between 1822 and 1831. The text published as *Reason in History* contains an elaborate version of the introductory part of these lectures. The *Philosophy of Right* was published in 1820, that is, two years after Hegel had been appointed in Berlin.
3. RH 48/42–43, cf. LPH 28/15.
4. See Avineri (1972: 154), Wartenberg (1981), McCumber (1986), Wood (1990: 237–55), and Honneth (2001: 121). Contrary to McCumber, I will disregard the differences between Hegel's published works and the various lecture courses devoted to the philosophy of right.
5. Since this chapter is concerned with this hesitation rather than with particular contents, I will not attack or defend those elements of Hegel's account of the modern state that have invited most criticisms. As regards Hegel's alleged anti-individualism I would like to note that he had some reason to be worried about the individualism propagated by the Romantics, which was, according to the then current norms, quite extreme. According to Hegel, the individual constitutes an essential moment of the state, but not its ultimate principle (cf. PR, § 260). Flügel-Martinsen (2008) rightly argues that the conservative strand of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* tends to conceal its critical strand (152–59). Contrary to the prevailing criticism of Hegel's alleged anti-individualism, Flügel highlights the critical potential of Hegel's account of the modern state. In his view, Hegel rightly stressed the importance of institutions that mediate between the state and the citizens and argues that contemporary democracies require such mediating institutions as well.
6. See Popper (1945: 27–80). Among the authors who have opposed this identification I mention only Knox (1970), Avineri (1972), and Wood (1991).
7. Cf. RH 45/40, 86–87/73–74, LPH 27–28/15, 39/25.
8. Spirit 'turns itself into its own object and its own content. Knowledge is its form and function, but its content is the spiritual itself' (RH 54/47). 'The essence of spirit, then, is self-consciousness.' (59/51, cf. 74/64, 122/102). Taylor (1979) interprets Hegel's conception of spirit along traditional lines, namely, as cosmic spirit (16), larger rational plan (23), and a self-positing God (36) which embodies itself in certain parcels of the universe (26). For this reason, he extracts those elements of Hegel's philosophy of right and world history he takes to be relevant today from Hegel's conception of spirit, which he considers to be 'close to incredible' (69, cf. 111). Although this separation results in a lucid account of Hegel's conception of the modern state, it seems to me that Taylor discards a conception of spirit that has very little

- to do with Hegel's philosophy of world history. See Wood (1990: 4–6) and Honneth (2001) for similar positions.
9. 'A nation [*Volk*] should therefore be regarded as a spiritual individual, and we are not primarily concerned with its external side, but rather with... the spirit of the nation, that is, its self-consciousness in respect of its own truth and essence.... The universal which emerges and becomes conscious within the state... is what we call in general the nation's culture [*Bildung*]. But the determinate content which this universal form acquires... is the spirit of the nation itself.' (RH 114–15/96–97, cf. 59/51, 61/53, LPH 30–31/17–18).
  10. Philosophy, according to Hegel, penetrates into the rational core of the state 'in order to find the inner pulse, and to feel its beat even in the external forms' (PR 25/20). He takes care to distinguish between these rational forms, however, and 'the infinitely varied circumstances which take shape within this externality' (25/20). Cf. PR, § 2, § 258 rem. (400/276) and Houlgate (2005: 182). As regards world history, Hegel distinguishes between three basic determinations of the principle of freedom. In accordance with the logical moments of the concept as such, this principle can be determined as the principle that one is free, that several are free, or that the human being as such is free. Hegel connects this logical distinction to (1) the oriental world, (2) the Greek and Roman world and (3) the modern world (RH 61–63/53–55, cf. 155–57/129–31, LPH 31–32/18–19).
  11. RH 86/73, cf. PR, § 260.
  12. PR, § 258 rem., § 279.
  13. LPH 22/10, 73/53, cf. 104–05/78, RH 60/52.
  14. LPH 96/71, RH 65/56.
  15. Hegel repeatedly uses the example of the plant to elucidate his conception of development: 'The seed does not manifest anything. It has the urge to develop; it cannot bear to be merely in itself. Its urge consists in the contradiction that it is merely in itself and should not be so. The urge pushes [the seed] into existence. Much is brought forth; but everything that is brought forth is already contained in the seed, albeit not developed, but enveloped and ideal.' (LHP I, 40–41/22, cf. L I, 140/129).
  16. 'The spirit of a people is... the foundation and content of the other forms in which consciousness of spirit is achieved.... Spirit is a single individual; in religion, its essential being is represented, revered, and enjoyed as the divine being or God; in art, it is represented as an image and intuition; and in philosophy, it is recognized and comprehended by thought.' (RH 123/103, cf. 123–25/103–05, LPH 87/64).
  17. Cf. Enc III, § 385. According to the *Encyclopedia*, art, religion, and philosophy are all concerned with the ultimate principle of nature and spirit as such (§ 565). Yet since the form proper to art and religion (§§ 559, 572) is not in agreement with this content, it is only within philosophy that spirit can truly achieve knowledge of itself as absolute spirit and thus enact itself as absolute idea (§ 552).
  18. LPH 93/69, 101/76.
  19. RH 27/26, 30/29, cf. LHP I, 49/30–31. See Chapter 6.2.
  20. LPH 23/11, RH 31/29.
  21. Cf. RH 28/27, 157/131. Hegel here distinguishes his adoption of the a priori category of reason (36/33) from the introduction of 'a priori fictions

- into history' (31/29). Categories he considers to be inadequate philosophically to comprehend world history are, among others, change (34/31) and perfectibility (149–50/125).
22. Hegel refers in this respect to morality (LPH 17/6, 91/67, RH 18/21, 79–80/68–69), sadness (RH 34/32) and piety (RH 41/37).
  23. According to Hegel, pre-modern civilizations perished because they were incapable of overcoming the conflict between the contrary determinations of their very principle. In this regard, no civilization has ever been able to survive the resolution of its inherent contradiction. However, modernity differs from pre-modern civilizations in that it cannot, in Hegel's view, turn into a civilization based on a less-one-sided principle. Whereas Hegel's philosophy of world history affirms, on the one hand, that every civilization gives birth to the conflict between the contrary moments of its very principle, it maintains, on the other hand, that these conflicts constitute the necessary moments of the increasing actualization of rational freedom. In this regard, modernity cannot but constitute the ultimate phase of this actualization.
  24. NL 494/103, cf. PR, § 185.
  25. Jen I, 230/249. In the *System of Ethical Life* (1802/03) Hegel refers to the system of need as 'an alien power over which [man] has no control'. The whole of needs and surplus 'is a scarcely knowable, invisible, and incalculable power' (SEL 492/167). Hegel, like Marx, draws on the work of Adam Smith, to which he refers explicitly (Jen I, 230/249) and implicitly (SEL 492/167). See on this Harris (1979: 75). As is well known, Marx had no access to Hegel's early texts.
  26. Jen I, 230/248, cf. Jen III, 222–24/138–40; see Avineri (1972: 87–98) for a clear account of Hegel's Jena texts on modern economy and civil society.
  27. PR, § 183, cf. § 198.
  28. PR, §§ 241–45. On this issue see Avineri (1972: 147–54), Wartenberg (1981), McCumber (1986), and Wood (1990: 247–55). I agree with Wood's suggestion that Hegel's philosophy, since it has no answer to the problem of poverty and oppression inherent in the modern state, here begins to reveal its limits (255). However, Wood does not elaborate on the implications of this view. Wartenberg, on the other hand, argues convincingly that Hegel's explicit conception of the threefold structure of civil society is at odds with his implicit, but equally present acknowledgment of the emerging opposition between owners and workers. I agree with Wartenberg that Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* could not incorporate this latter class structure into his philosophical account of the modern state.
  29. PR, § 246. Hegel remarks in this context that modern societies attempt to satisfy the need for new markets by means of colonialism (PR, § 248, rem.).
  30. Cf. PR 26/21–22, LHP I, 74/54–55, LHP III, 456/547.
  31. Prussia abolished serfdom in 1810 and allowed the nobility to appropriate lands formerly used by the peasants. This change forced large groups of peasants to wander the country in search of work. As work was scarce, this drift often ended in the cities that had begun to embrace industrialization. See Pinkard (2000: 423, 486).
  32. When the *Philosophy of Right* was published, the conservative reaction against the reform movement was gaining the upper hand. Hegel, who was indirectly involved with representatives of the reform movement, tried to

- get round the censors – and to preserve his position at the university – by including some ambiguous remarks on the modern state and an unambiguous attack on Fries in its preface. During these years, Hegel received some protection from the reformed minister of culture Von Altenstein, to whom he owed his appointment. For a detailed account see Pinkard (2000), chs. 10–11, and Heiman (1971). Klenner (1982) argues that Hegel's ideas concerning the rationally structured state are compatible with the constitution proposed by the reformers Humboldt and Stein. He refers to many elements of Hegel's account that deviate from the effort to reinforce an absolutist organization of the state. See also Avineri (1972: 70, 161–75) and Wood (1990: 12–14).
33. RH 144/121. The distinction between the universal and the subjective will corresponds to the distinction in the *Logic* between the good as such and finite moral ends which was discussed in Chapter 8.6.
  34. LPH 539/456, my emphasis, cf. PR, § 279, add., § 280, add.
  35. Hegel seems to prefer a constitutional monarchy to a republic mainly for pragmatic reasons: 'The fundamental... definition of freedom has led to the very widespread theory that the republic is the only just and authentic constitution.' Yet among those who have adopted this view, many 'have nevertheless perceived that such a constitution, though it may well be the best, cannot always be realized, and that, men being what they are, we must content ourselves with a lesser degree of freedom. Under the given circumstances, and with the moral condition of the people as it is, the monarchic constitution would therefore seem the most advantageous one' (RH 140–41/118, cf. 145/121). If modern societies are to control the ambition and greed entailed by the development of the 'powers of particularity', it is 'not enough for the heads of state to be virtuous; if the whole is to have the strength to maintain its unity, another form of rational law is required than that of moral disposition' (PR, § 273, 438/310, cf. § 273, add., § 279–80). The *Philosophy of Right* contends that since the monarch itself is exempt from the realm of arbitrariness, a monarchy does not fall prey to the endless struggle of opposed factions to get political power (§ 281). Moreover, Hegel here maintains – unconvincingly – that the immediate, natural element proper to the monarchy is rational in itself (§ 280, rem.).
  36. RH 147/123, cf. RH 143/119–20.
  37. PR, § 302. Cf.: 'The proper significance of the estates is that it is through them that the state enters into the subjective consciousness of the people, and that the people begins to participate in the state.' (§ 301, add.). The estates should not gain the upper hand however, for 'since the estates have their origin... in particular interests, they are inclined to direct their efforts toward these at the expense of the universal interest' (§ 301, rem.).
  38. In modern times, Hegel notes in an addition to the *Philosophy of Right*, the corporations had been abolished, since everybody was now supposed to take care of himself. Hegel consents that the traditional system of self-contained guilds should not be revived. He holds, however, that only modern corporations, uniting citizens according to their trade, profession, or confession, might ward off the atomism promoted by modern liberalism (PR, § 255, add.). See on this Pinkard (2000: 420) and Flügel-Martinsen (2008: 161–64).
  39. Hegel's use of the term *Stand* (estate) covers various ways in which people with particular interests might organize themselves and have their rights

represented in local, regional, or national politics (cf. PR, § 298–315, in particular § 303, rem., SEL 495/170). Whereas the term ‘estate’ traditionally referred to the representative organs of the nobility and the cities of a particular province, reformers such as Stein tried – unsuccessfully – to emancipate these representative organs from their feudal origin. See Kosselleck (1975) for a detailed account of these developments.

40. PR, § 290, add. (tr. mod.), cf. § 303. Needless to say, Hegel considers an ‘organic’ organization of the masses to imply their subordination to the government; hence his critique of the notion of popular sovereignty (cf. PR, § 279). The early essay *The German Constitution* (1802) expresses a similar concern: ‘The estates of the Prussian provinces have lost their significance owing to the power of the king’s authority (GC 573/235). ‘The principle of the original German state... was the principle of monarchy, a political power under an overlord for the conduct of national business with the co-operation of the people through its representatives. The form of this principle survives in what is called the Diet; but the thing itself has vanished.’ (575/237). ‘[T]he bent of the estates is primarily toward their own country; they have lost all bearing on the whole.’ (576/237–38).
41. PR, § 279, 447/319, cf. § 311, rem. At this point Hegel distances himself from the liberal reformers who pleaded for a democratic constitution.
42. LPH 534–35/452, cf. RH 146/122.
43. Cf. PR, § 311, rem.
44. See Mouffe (2000, 2005) for an account of socio-political conflicts that, without drawing on Hegel, goes in a similar direction. Highlighting the antagonistic logic that liberal politics, as she contends, fails to take into account, she argues that modern democracies should attempt to channel rather than suppress the polarization of contending socio-political perspectives.
45. It goes without saying that the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 has dramatically enhanced the polarization of contending cultural paradigms discussed in this chapter. This event has equally dramatically decreased the space for critical reflections on the purportedly enlightened paradigm adhered to by the US and Europe. Criticisms of these recent developments have been voiced by, among others, Butler (2004), Crichtley (2007), and Hind (2007). It seems to me, however, that these criticisms as yet lack a conceptual paradigm the force of which can be compared to the criticisms put forward by Marxism, critical theory, or feminist theory. As I see it, a critical approach to contemporary intercultural conflicts cannot endorse one side in order to attack the other, but should rather target the polarizing dynamic that intensifies their opposition. With regard to accounts of contemporary (intercultural) conflicts inspired by Hegel – but developed before 9/11 – I only mention Taylor (1979, 1994) and Honneth (1995). My own approach differs from theirs in various respects. First, I do not underwrite their strict distinction between Hegel’s speculative and political philosophy, because I hold that the latter is deeply informed by the former. Second, I take the view that Taylor and Honneth do not sufficiently distinguish themselves from the legacy of the Enlightenment, especially with regard to such ideas as selfhood, autonomy, and progress. Third, I do not think that the concept of mutual recognition – which is almost completely absent from Hegel’s mature political philosophy – suffices to grasp the tragic dynamic of conflicts unfolding

- between individuals or collectives seeking recognition. This is all the more true, I believe, with regard to the dynamic of intercultural conflicts.
46. See Kimmerle (1993) and Bernasconi (1998).
  47. LPH 278/226 (my own translation). I owe the reference to this passage to McCarney (2000: 141). According to Hegel, German culture likewise developed 'by taking up and overcoming what was foreign to it' (LPH 413/341–42).
  48. Phen 314/288, cf. L I, 192–93/172.
  49. To be sure, the distinction between universality and particularity is a distinction proper to the prevailing paradigm of modernity – the difference between the contending paradigms may be perceived in completely different terms by those who experience the purportedly modern culture represented by the state as a threat to their cultural tradition.
  50. To some extent, the following account is inspired by – and corresponds to – the conception of cultural difference that emerges from Visker's critical response to Levinas. Thus, Visker (2004) argues that Levinas, focusing one-sidedly on the infinite transcendence of the other, does not account for the eccentric attachment of the other – as much as of myself – to particular characteristics such as sex, color, and cultural tradition. He maintains against Levinas that I wrong the other not only by reducing him or her to his or her singularizing characteristics, but also by abstracting from the complex and finite relation of the other to these characteristics: 'A person who refuses to be solely recognized as a human being... does not want to be reduced to his/her ('different') skin-color, etc., but also refuses to be detached from it – insists on something that... escapes full understanding, is not possessed, cannot be determined.' (181, cf. 14). According to Visker's understanding of the intersubjective relation, I can neither reduce the face of the other to the particular context from which it emerges nor, on the other hand, disentangle it from this facticity. This entails that the other confronts me not only with my infinite responsibility, but equally with my proper incapacity to come to terms with a singularity that haunts my attempts to identify with myself (183, 289).
  51. I largely agree with Taylor's analysis of the problems challenging contemporary multicultural societies and his attempt to understand these problems from a Hegelian perspective. Taylor (1979: 114–18) rightly points out that the homogenization characteristic of modern societies threatens to deprive people of the means to identify with particular values. According to Taylor, we can learn from Hegel that modern society needs 'a ground for differentiation, meaningful to the people concerned, which at the same time does not set the particular communities against each other, but rather knits them together in a larger whole' (117). Taylor (1994) further develops this approach in relation to the tension between Francophone and Anglophone communities in Canada. In this essay he argues more specifically that cultural differences be recognized. What has to happen, Taylor holds, is 'a fusion of horizons' (67). This suggests that Taylor is even more optimistic with regard to the future than Hegel is often taken to be.
  52. This is the aim of, for instance, Chebel (2004).
  53. RH 257/209. Cf.: 'But if we say that universal reason accomplishes itself, this has of course nothing to do with individual empirical instances; the latter

may fare either well or badly, as the case may be, for the concept has granted contingency and particularity the power to exercise their tremendous right in the empirical sphere.' (76/66).

54. RH 256/208. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* Hegel refers to speculative science as the mode of spirit in which spirit comprehends itself as absolute spirit. He does not say, however, that spirit has become actual in all respects. He merely remarks that his *lectures* have reached the present point of view, such that there remains, for the time being, nothing more to tell: '[T]he series of spiritual forms is... for the present [*für jetzt*] concluded. At this point I bring this history of philosophy to a close.' (LHP III, 460–61/552). However, this end at the same time constitutes a beginning, for Hegel expresses the hope that his lectures will encourage his students to grasp 'the spirit of the age... and pull it out of its natural state, that is, of its concealment and lifelessness into the light of day' (462/533). Much work therefore remains to be done.
55. PR 24/20, cf. § 46, rem., § 185, rem. and add., Jen III, 240, note 2/160, note 24, LHP II, 114/99.

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- D ‘Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie’ [1801], in: *Jenaer Schrifte 1801–1807 / The Difference between Fichte’s and Schelling’s Systems of Philosophy*, translated by H.S. Harris and W. Cerf (Albany, NY: SUNY Press 1977).
- FK ‘Glauben und Wissen oder Reflexionsphilosophie der Subjektivität in der Vollständigkeit ihrer Formen als Kantische, Jacobische und Fichtesche Philosophie’ [1802], in: *Jenaer Schrifte 1801–1807 / Faith and Knowledge*, translated by W. Cerf and H.S. Harris (Albany, NY: SUNY Press 1977).
- NL ‘Über die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts, seine Stelle in der praktische Philosophie und sein Verhältnis zu den positiven Wissenschaften’ [1802/03], in: *Jenaer Schriften 1801–1807 / Natural Law: The Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law, its Place in Moral Philosophy, and its Relation to the Positive Sciences of Law*, translated by T.M. Knox (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press 1975).
- GC ‘Die Verfassung Deutschlands’ [1802], in: *Frühe Schriften / ‘The German Constitution’ in: Hegel’s Political Writings*, translated by T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1964).
- SEL *System der Sittlichkeit* [1802/03], edited by G. Lasson (Hamburg: Meiner 1967) / ‘The System of Ethical Life’, in: *System of Ethical Life (1802/3) and First Philosophy of Spirit*, translated by H.S. Harris and T.M. Knox (Albany, NY: SUNY Press 1979).
- Jen I *Jenaer Systementwürfe I: Das System der Spekulativen Philosophie* [1803/04], edited by K. Düsing and H. Kimmerle (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1986) / partly translated as: ‘Hegel’s First Philosophy of Spirit’, in: *System of Ethical Life (1802/3) and First Philosophy of Spirit*, translated by H.S. Harris and T.M. Knox (Albany, NY: SUNY Press 1979).
- Jen II *Jenaer Systementwürfe II: Logik, Metaphysik, Naturphilosophie* [1804/05], edited by R.-P. Horstmann (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1982) / partly translated as: *The Jena System, 1804–5: Logic and Metaphysics*, translated and edited by J.W. Burbridge and G. di Giovanni (Kingston: McGill/Queen’s University Press 1986).



- Jen III      *Jenaer Systementwürfe III: Naturphilosophie und Philosophie des Geistes* [1805/06], edited by R.-P. Horstmann (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1987) / partly translated as: *Hegel and the Human Spirit. A translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805–6)*, translated by L. Rauch (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press 1983).
- Phen      *Phänomenologie des Geistes* [1807], edited by H.-F. Wessels and H. Clairmont (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1988) / *Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1977).
- L I and L II      *Wissenschaft der Logik* (2 vols.) [1812–16, 1831] / *Hegel's Science of Logic*, translated by A.V. Miller (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books 1998).
- WL I      *Wissenschaft der Logik I* [1812], *Gesammelte Werke XI*, edited by F. Hogemann and W. Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1978).
- Enc I      *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse I* [1817–1830] / *Hegel's Logic*, translated by W. Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1975).
- Enc II      *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse II* [1817–1830] / *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, edited and translated by M.J. Petry (London/New York: Humanities Press 1970).
- Enc III      *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse III* [1817–1830] / *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, translated by W. Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1975).
- PR      *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* [1821] / *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, translated by H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- LHP I      *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie I* [1805–1831] / *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, translated by E.S. Haldane and H. Simson (Lincoln, NE/London: University of Nebraska Press 1995).
- LHP III      *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III* [1805–1831] / *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 3, translated by E.S. Haldane and H. Simson (Lincoln, NE/London: University of Nebraska Press 1995).
- LPH      *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* [1822–1831] / *The Philosophy of History*, translated by J. Sibree (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books 1991).
- RH      *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte Band I: Die Vernunft in der Geschichte* [1822–1831], edited by J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1955) / *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction: Reason in History*, translated by H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1975).
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- CPJ *Kritik der Urteilkraft* [1790], edited by K. Vorländer (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1990) / *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, translated by P. Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000).

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- IPN 'Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur' [1797], in: *Schellings Werke I*, edited by M. Schröter (München: Beck 1927) / *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, translated by E.H. Harris and P. Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1980).
- STI *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* [1800], (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1992) / *System of Transcendental Idealism*, translated by P. Heath (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia 1978).
- WBN 'Über den wahren Begriff der Naturphilosophie' [1801], *Schellings Werke II*, edited by M. Schröter (München: Beck 1927).
- HMP 'Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie. Münchner Vorlesungen' [1827], *Schellings Werke V*, edited by M. Schröter (München: Beck 1927) / *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, translated by A. Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994).

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# Index

## A

- absolute knowing, 109–21, 224 n. 14, 233 n. 31
  - see also* idea; absolute
- absolute, the, 77
  - definitions of, 45–6, 47, 55–6, 220 n. 40, 223 n. 5
- Adorno, T.W., 5–6, 209 n. 6, 210 n. 10, 210 n. 12
- Aeschylus, 14, 207, 214 n. 16, 215 n. 27
- Aesthetics*, *see* *Lectures on*
- aether, 128, 132–3, 134, 238 n. 14
- Africa, 196
- Agamemnon*, 14
- animal, 129–32, 138–42, 145–6, 240 n. 34
- Antigone*, 10–11, 17–23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 86, 90, 95–7, 98, 101, 176, 211–12 n. 2
- antinomies, Kant's doctrine of the, 33, 50, 51, 74, 85–8, 221 n. 49
- archaic v. rational, *see* ethical life
- Aristotle, 12, 60, 159, 224 n. 21, 239 n. 25, 242 n. 9
- art, 14, 151, 183, 245 n. 17
- Avineri, S. 244 n. 4, 244 n. 6, 246 n. 26, 246 n. 28, 247 n. 32

## B

- Barker, D.W.M., 215 n. 25
- Barnett, S., 210 n. 10
- becoming, concept of, 56–8, 62
- being, concept of, 46–7, 56–8, 61, 77–8
- being-for-itself, concept of, 92–5
- Bernasconi, R., 249 n. 46
- Bonsiepen, W., 222 n. 2
- Bourgeois, B., 231 n. 13
- Brandom, R., 211 n. 14
- Butler, C., 224 n. 21

- Butler, J., 210 n. 11, 211 n. 2, 248 n. 45
- Büttner, S., 238 n. 14

## C

- capitalism, 186–8
- categories, *see* concepts
- causality, concept of, 48–50
- ceasing-to-be, concept of, 58
- Chebel, M., 249 n. 52
- circle / cycle, *see* circularity
- circularity, 63, 79, 111, 121, 234 n. 35, 234 n. 37
  - of the (parts of the) system, 104, 109–10, 112–21, 121
  - of the *Phenomenology*, 104, 110–12, 224–5 n. 22
  - see also* method
- civil society, 186–8, 192
- civilization, 182–5, 188, 196–7, 246 n. 23
- collision, *see* conflicts
- coming-to-be, concept of, 58
- concept, the 35, 42, 43, 45, 46, 50–2, 56, 77–8, 82, 105, 121–5, 132, 135, 139, 143, 145, 153, 169, 182, 238 n. 17
  - cunning of, 78–9
- concepts, empirical, 155, pure, 31, 35, 36–41, 44–51, 56, 80, 145, 147, 152, 155, 242 n. 12
  - synthetic, 42, 44–51, 58
  - see also* under individual concepts
- conceptual oppositions, 1, 26, 32, 33, 49, 51, 52, 63–6, 76, 85–8, 102, 205–7, 209 n. 4, 225 n. 24
- conflicts, 1, 185, 189, 195
  - intercultural, 195–6, 198, 200–2, 248–9 n. 45
  - tragic, 3–4, 10–11, 13–14, 19–25, 28–9, 83, 87, 95–7, 100–2, 171,

173–5, 176–7, 181, 198, 206,  
215 n. 26  
*see also* tragic; tragedy  
 consciousness, 17, 43, 93–4,  
98, 110, 130, 142–5, 149,  
175–6  
 contingency, 114, 129, 151, 185,  
234 n. 38  
 contradiction, 74, 113, 227 n. 41  
   concept of, 74, 95–7, 228 n. 20  
 Cook, D.J., 241 n. 8  
 Coplestone, F., 223 n. 10  
 corporation, 192–3, 195, 247 n. 38  
 creation, 103, 166  
 Critchley, S., 248 n. 45  
 critique, immanent, 4–5  
 culture, Greek 2–3, 12–14, 15–16,  
18–20, 196–7

**D**

De Beistegui, M., 213 n. 9  
 De Boer, K., 210 n. 10, 214 n. 17,  
218 n. 15, 225 n. 24, 230 n. 20  
 democracy, 193–4  
 Derrida, J., 5–6, 209 n. 7, 210 n. 10,  
210 n. 12  
 Descartes, R., 239 n. 25  
 Descombes, V., 210 n. 11  
 Desmond, W., 209 n. 3  
 determinacy / determinateness,  
226 n. 34  
 determinate being, concept of, 60,  
221 n. 44  
 dialectic, 2, 17, 29, 83, 102, 171, 174,  
178, 180, 195, 212 n. 3, 226 n. 37,  
227 n. 415  
   transcendental, 37–9, 44  
*see also* method  
*Differenzschrift*, 30, 31–4, 34–5, 50,  
105–9, 130, 217 n. 11  
*Doctrine of Being*, 36, 59–63, 68–71, 72,  
73–5, 76–80, 88–95, 97–8  
*Doctrine of the Concept*, 36, 66–8, 76,  
79, 80–2, 148, 158–71  
*Doctrine of Essence*, 36, 63–6, 75,  
76–80, 95–7  
 Duquette, D., 216 n. 2

**E**

economy, 185–9  
 ego, 43, 97, 122, 142–3, 145  
*see also* subject; self-consciousness  
*Encyclopedia*, 7, 45, 47–8, 128, 130–1,  
148  
 end-relation, 158–78  
*see also* teleology; purposiveness  
 enlightenment, Hegel's critique of,  
100–2  
 entanglement, 3, 8, 11, 15–17, 21,  
27–8, 70, 85, 87–8, 93–5, 126–7,  
143, 148, 156, 159, 172–5, 177–8,  
181, 189, 194–5, 197–8, 199–201,  
213–4 n. 15  
   logic of, 3, 11, 25–9, 102, 126–7,  
146, 156, 172–5, 177–9, 189,  
195, 200–2, 206–7, 243 n. 13  
*Essay on Natural Law*, 3, 11–17, 21–2,  
25–7, 86, 185–6  
 essence  
   concept of, 63–6, 77–8, 82  
   v. appearance, 63–6, 82, 87  
 ethical life, 12–17, 18–19, 28  
   archaic, 13, 15–16, 18, 21, 25, 27–9,  
175–6, 213 n. 9  
   rational, 13, 15–17, 18, 21, 25, 27–9,  
175–6  
*Eumenides, The*, 11, 14, 15, 21–3, 101,  
215 n. 28  
 Euripides, 214 n. 25  
 exteriority / externality  
   inner, 152, 154, 161, 171–5, 176–7,  
178  
   linguistic, 152, 154  
   spatio-temporal, 113–17, 121,  
123–5, 143, 167, 169  
*see also* space; time

**F**

faith, 100–1  
*Faith and Knowledge*, 30, 42, 86–7  
 family, 10–11, 20, 23–5  
 Fichte, J.G., 31, 229 n. 14, 236 n. 5,  
243 n. 10  
 finite, concept of the, 89–92  
   *compare* the infinite  
 finitude, 171, 174, 178–9

Flügel-Martinsen, O., 244 n. 5,  
247 n. 38  
Forster, M., 224–5 n. 22  
freedom, 75, 176, 180, 182–5, 188–93,  
202–4, 206, 245 n. 10  
Fries, J.F. 247 n. 32  
Fulda, H.F., 216 n. 1, 224 n. 21

## G

Gadamer H.-G., 240 n. 3, 242 n. 13  
Gasché, R., 209 n. 7  
gender, 19, 214 n. 18  
'German Constitution', 248 n. 39  
Glockner, H., 228 n. 2  
God, 46, 103, 116–17  
    *see also* idea of reason  
good, the, 162, 166–8, 171, 174  
Grene, D., 214 n. 16  
ground, concept of, 96

## H

Hahn, S.S., 237 n. 6  
Harris, H.S., 246 n. 25  
Hartmann, K., 211 n. 13, 215 n. 1,  
216 n. 2  
Heidegger, M., 5–6, 210 n. 10  
Heiman, G., 247 n. 32  
Henrich, D., 222 n. 1, 234 n. 38  
Heraclitus, 56–9, 215 n. 26, 223 n. 10  
Hind, D., 248 n. 45  
history, *see* world history  
history of philosophy, 54–68, 71–2,  
76, 80  
    beginning of the, 56–7  
    its relation to logical science, 55–68,  
    71–2, 76, 79–80, 223 n. 6,  
    224 n. 21  
history of pure thought, 31, 41, 51,  
56, 61, 79–80, 155  
    *see also* thought  
Hölderlin, F., 211 n. 1  
Honneth, A., 244 n. 4, 245 n. 8,  
248–9 n. 45  
Horstmann, R.-P., 236 n. 2  
Hösle, V., 231 n. 13  
Houlgate, S., 211 n. 14, 216 n. 1,  
216 n. 2, 219 n. 31, 221 n. 48,

225 n. 22, 230 n. 2, 236 n. 2,  
240 n. 3, 245 n. 10  
Hutchings, K., 212 n. 2  
Hyppolite, J., 231 n. 13, 241 n. 6

## I

I, *see* ego  
idea  
    absolute, 52, 72, 99, 115–16, 117,  
    120, 132, 222 n. 51, 233 n. 31  
    as such, 114, 115, 132–3, 233 n. 31  
    logical, 115, 153, 224 n. 21  
    of nature, 115, 117, 118–19  
    of reason (Kant), 32–3, 36, 37–8, 41,  
    44–6, 51, 114  
    of spirit, 115, 118–19  
imagination, 144  
infinite progress, 91, 229 n. 14  
infinity / the infinite  
    concept of, 88–92  
    spurious, 89, 136  
    true, 89, 91  
    *compare* finite  
insight, pure, 100–1  
Irigaray, L., 211 n. 2

## J

*Jena System Drafts*, 121, 128–9, 131–46,  
186–7  
judgment  
    empirical, 61, 69–70  
    synthetic a priori, 34–5, 36, 39, 42

## K

Kant, I., 7, 30, 31–44, 46–7, 50, 65, 76,  
115, 120, 122–3, 129, 159, 167–8,  
173, 178, 216 n. 1, 216 n. 2,  
218–19 n. 19, 222 n. 3, 228 n. 6,  
229 n. 14, 242 n. 2, 243 n. 10  
Hegel's critique of, 31–4, 35, 37–8,  
39, 41, 42, 67, 86–7, 122, 140,  
145, 228 n. 7  
Kaufmann, W., 215 n. 27  
Kierkegaard, S., 5  
Kimmerle, H., 236 n. 3, 249 n. 46  
Klenner, H., 247 n. 32

knowledge  
 a posteriori, 32  
 a priori, 32, 37  
 empirical, 32, 46, 49  
 immanent, 35, 39  
 purely rational, 30, 37, 44, 46, 49,  
 52, 217 n. 2

Knox, T.M., 244 n. 6  
 Kolb, D., 208–9 n. 2  
 Kosselleck, R., 248 n. 39  
 Koyré, A., 239 n. 23  
 Kreines, J., 217 n. 2  
 Krings, H., 236 n. 5

## L

Labarrière, P.J., 231 n. 13  
 Lacoue-Labarthe, P., 211 n. 1  
 language, 40, 145, 147–57  
 its relation to thought, 147–9,  
 152–6, 241 n. 4  
 law  
 divine, 19–21  
 human, 19–21  
 see also ethical life  
*Lectures on Aesthetics*, 24, 25, 27  
*Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 57,  
 61, 62–3, 84  
*Lectures on the Philosophy of History*,  
 196–7  
 Leibniz, G.W., 31, 33, 37, 219 n. 20,  
 228 n. 6, 229 n. 17  
 Levinas, E., 249 n. 50  
*Libation Bearers, The*, 213 n. 13  
 life, 160, 165, 169–70  
 see also nature  
 Llewelyn J., 221 n. 49  
 Locke, J., 228 n. 6  
 logic  
 of entanglement, see entanglement  
 formal, 42  
 transcendental, 32, 36–9, 44  
 see also speculative science  
 logical science, see *Science of Logic*  
 Longuenesse, B., 216 n. 2, 225 n. 24

## M

Mabille, B., 234 n. 39  
 Magee, G.A., 232 n. 21

Malabou, C., 210 n. 10, 230 n. 2  
 Marx, K., 5, 188, 246 n. 25  
 Marx, W., 242 n. 14.  
 matter, 133, 138  
 McCarney, J., 249 n. 47  
 McCumber, J., 241 n. 4, 244 n. 4,  
 246 n. 28  
 McDowell, J., 6  
 means, the, 162–5, 172, 175  
 measure, concept of, 60  
 Menke, C., 209 n. 6, 212 n. 4  
 metaphysics, 30, 31, 36, 39, 44, 46  
 general, 36–7, 44  
 rationalist, 32–3  
 special, 36, 37–9, 44–7  
 see also ontology  
 method, Hegel's, 7, 17–18, 41, 43–4,  
 48–9, 59, 72, 80–3, 88–92,  
 99–100, 104, 110, 182, 219 n. 31,  
 223 n. 12, 227 n. 47, 234 n. 34,  
 234 n. 37  
 see also circularity; speculative  
 science; system  
 Mills, P.J., 211 n. 2  
 modernity, 1–2, 208 n.1, 208–9 n. 2  
 criticism of, 3, 4, 180–1, 194–5,  
 205–7  
 Hegel's critique of, 1–2, 100–2, 180  
 monarchy, 191, 247 n. 35, 248 n. 40  
 morality, 166–8  
 Mouffe, C., 248 n. 44  
 movement, 135, 137

## N

Nancy, J.L., 210 n. 10  
 natural sciences, 131, 237 n. 6  
 nature  
 inorganic, 137–8  
 organic, 138, 160, 165  
 philosophy of, 105–9, 114, 117–20,  
 128–46  
 realm of, 104, 113–15, 160  
 see also idea of nature  
 negation, 72  
 negation of the, 54, 69–70, 71, 75,  
 81, 97, 136, 210 n. 10, 222 n. 1  
 negative, the, 2, 61

negativity, 2–3, 22, 124, 210 n. 10  
 absolute, 2–4, 11, 13, 44, 52–3, 54,  
 59, 68–70, 71–5, 100, 125–7,  
 134–5, 146, 157, 159, 174–5,  
 178–9, 185, 203–4, 207  
 abstract, 71, 72–3, 124, 126–7, 136,  
 137, 178–9, 204  
 contradictory, 71, 74–5, 235 n. 49  
 tragic, 3–4, 126–7, 159, 175, 178–9,  
 185, 207  
 Neuser, W., 238 n. 13  
 Newton, I., 238 n. 13  
 Nietzsche, F., 177, 215 n. 26  
 nothing, concept of, 57–8, 61,  
 72–3, 74  
 Nussbaum, M.C., 212–13 n. 4  
 Nuzzo, A., 219 n. 31

## O

object of experience, 39, 47  
 one, concept of the, 97–8  
 ontological perspectives, 36–7, 41, 48,  
 49, 218 n. 15  
 ontology, 30, 36–7, 216 n. 2, 218 n. 15  
*see also* metaphysics  
*Oresteia*, 14–15, 26

## P

Parmenides, 56–9, 83, 223 n. 10  
 particularity, 188, 196, 198–201  
*compare* universality  
 passion, 162, 170–1  
 Peperzak, A.T., 217 n. 2  
 perception, 139–44  
*Phenomenology of Spirit*, 6, 17–25, 44,  
 98, 100–1, 104, 109, 110–12,  
 114–16, 125, 148  
 philosophy  
 continental, 5–6  
 Greek, 25–6, 179  
 Hegel's conception of the task of,  
 31–2, 34, 39–40, 42, 43, 105  
 modern, 1, 3, 65, 75, 76  
 post-analytic, 6  
*see also* history of philosophy  
*Philosophy of Right*, 182, 187–8, 190,  
 192, 196, 204

Pinkard, T., 215 n. 1, 216 n. 2,  
 230 n. 2, 232 n. 19, 236 n. 2,  
 246 n. 31, 247 n. 32, 247 n. 38  
 Pippin, R., 209 n. 2, 211 n. 13,  
 215–16 n. 1, 220 n. 34  
 Plato, 12, 60, 62, 185, 204,  
 236 n. 5, 238 n. 14, 239 n. 25,  
 242 n. 9  
 polarization / depolarization, 17, 196,  
 198–202, 205, 248 n. 45  
 politics, 189–95  
 Popper, K.R., 244 n. 6  
 poverty, 181, 187–8  
 presuppositions / presuppositionless,  
 55, 111–13, 165, 169, 184,  
 219 n. 31, 227 n. 46, 235 n. 39,  
 245–6 n. 21  
 principle of self-determination, *see*  
 self-determination  
 Prussia, 181–2, 190–1, 192, 248 n. 40  
 purposiveness  
 concept of, 160–1, 175  
 external, 160, 161–4, 166–7, 170,  
 171–2, 174  
 internal, 160, 164–6, 169–70, 171–2,  
 174–5, 180  
*see also* end-relation; teleology

## Q

quality, concept of, 60  
 quantity, concept of, 60

## R

reason  
 cunning of, 170–1, 177  
 (Hegel), 31, 33–4, 42, 76, 122–3,  
 169–71  
 (Kant), 32–3, 35, 122  
*compare* understanding  
*Reason in History*, 55, 149–50,  
 175–6  
 recognition, 24, 97–8, 248–9 n. 45  
 reconciliation / resolution / sublation,  
 2–4, 11, 13, 17, 25, 31, 81, 84, 91,  
 99, 101, 102, 181, 202, 203,  
 212 n. 3,  
*see also* dialectic

reflection, 64, 225 n. 245  
 determinations of, 82, 225 n. 24  
 excluding, 96  
 external, 64, 221 n. 45  
 release, 108, 111, 115, 116, 117,  
 231 n. 12, 232 n. 21  
*see also* resolve  
 religion, 14, 100–1, 151, 183,  
 245 n. 17  
 resolve, 108–9, 112, 116, 121, 165  
*see also* release  
 Rorty, R., 6

**S**

Schelling, F.W.J., 31, 103, 105–9, 117,  
 119–20, 121, 130, 230 n. 2,  
 231 n. 8, 235 n. 39, 236 n. 5,  
 238 n. 14  
 Schmidt, D.J., 215 n. 26  
 Schopenhauer, A., 177  
 Schulz, W., 231 n. 10  
 science, *see* natural sciences;  
 speculative science  
*Science of Logic*, 5, 6, 7, 30–1, 36–53,  
 54–83, 88–100, 109, 123, 148,  
 153–4, 158–71  
 beginning of, 79–80, 112–13,  
 223 n. 12, 227 n. 47  
 end of, 116–18  
 relation between its parts, 76–80, 82  
 its relation to history of philosophy,  
*see* history of philosophy  
 its various parts, *see Doctrine*  
 self-actualization, 4, 26, 43, 49, 91,  
 164, 175, 245 n. 15  
 self-consciousness, 43, 94, 98,  
 216 n. 1, 226 n. 36  
 of a community, 14, 18  
 self-determination, principle of, 31,  
 35, 43, 45, 62, 67, 75, 126, 160,  
 168–9  
 sense certainty, 17, 112  
 Simon, J., 241 n. 6, 241 n. 8  
 skepticism, 74, 212, n. 3, 226 n. 37  
 Socrates, 215 n. 26  
 something, concept of, 68–71  
 Sophocles, 214 n. 25

soul, 45  
*see also* idea of reason  
 space, 115, 122–4, 128, 130–7, 143–6  
*see also* externality; time  
 speculative science, 2, 3, 26–7, 36,  
 43–4, 67–8, 75, 108–11, 114–15,  
 118–21, 125, 184, 227 n. 41  
 as reconstruction, 40–1, 42, 44, 59,  
 61, 79, 110–21, 136  
 Spinoza, B., 5, 60, 65–6, 229 n. 17  
 spirit, 175–7, 178, 181–2  
 absolute, 116, 183  
 history of, 122, 124, 146, 150–1  
 objective, 182, 183, 202  
 of a people, 18  
 philosophy of, 114, 18, 131  
 realm of, 104, 113–15, 122, 160  
 subjective, 45, 149  
 world, 181, 182–3  
 state, 162, 186  
 Greek, 10–11, 12, 20, 23–5, 185  
 modern, 181, 182, 188, 189–93,  
 196, 198–202  
 Stekeler-Weithofer P., 211 n. 13  
 Stern, R., 217 n. 2  
 Stone, A., 237 n. 6  
 subject, 43, 167–8  
 subject and object  
 opposition between, 31–2, 33, 152  
 unity of, 34, 39, 68, 105, 217 n. 11  
 sublation, *see* reconciliation  
 substance  
 concept of, 42  
 ethical, 19–20, 22  
 synthesis, 35, 44, 51, 82, 100  
 synthetic a priori principles, *see*  
 judgment  
 system  
 circular character of Hegel's, *see*  
 circularity  
 Hegel's, 4, 34, 35, 108–21, 125  
 Kant's projected, 217 n. 5  
 Schelling's early, 105–9  
 'System of Ethical Life', 246 n. 25  
 Szondi, P., 212 n. 3

## T

- Taylor, C., 5, 244–5 n. 8, 248 n. 45,  
249 n. 51  
teleology, concept of, 75, 99,  
158–9  
    *see also* end-relation; purposiveness  
thought  
    forms of, 38  
    objective / objectifying, 40, 41, 52,  
    112, 117  
    pure, 38, 44  
    its relation to language, 147–9,  
    152–6  
    *see also* history of pure thought  
Tillette, X., 231 n. 10  
time, 104, 111, 115, 121–7, 128,  
130–7, 139–42, 143–6, 204  
    *see also* externality; space  
tragedy  
    Greek, 14, 25, 179, 214 n. 16,  
    214 n. 25  
    Hegel's conception of, 2, 10,  
    14, 17–29, 87, 95–7, 171,  
    197  
    *see also* conflicts; the tragic  
tragic, the, 4, 126, 207, 212 n. 2,  
215 n. 26, 228 n. 25

## U

- understanding, the  
    (Hegel), 34, 41, 48–50, 76, 89,  
    221 n. 45

(Kant) 32

*compare* reason

- universality, 23–4, 149, 194, 198–200  
    *see also* particularity

## V

- Vernant, J.P., 213 n. 9, 214–15 n. 25,  
215 n. 27  
Vieweg, K., 236 n. 2  
Visker, R., 249 n. 50  
Volkman-Schluck, 231 n. 13  
Von Altenstein, K.S.F., 247 n. 32  
Von Baader, F., 232 n. 21

## W

- Wandschneider D., 231 n. 13  
Wartenberg, T.E., 244 n. 4, 246 n. 28  
Westphal, K., 237 n. 6  
White, A., 216 n. 2  
will, 175–7  
    particular, 193–4, 195  
    rational / universal, 190, 191,  
    193–4, 195  
Wolff, C., 31, 36, 37, 228 n. 6  
Wood, A., 244 n. 4, 244 n. 6, 245 n. 8,  
246 n. 28, 247 n. 32  
world as such, 165–9  
    *see also* idea of reason  
world history, 55, 124, 126, 146, 150,  
158, 170–1, 175, 180–5  
    goal of, 202–4  
world spirit, *see* spirit